AMSTRAD ACTION

NOT an official Amstrad publication!!

Power-packed reviews each month on the amazing CPC 464 and 664

No. 1 OCTOBER 1985 £1

THE MOULD-BREAKING MEGAZINE FROM FUTURE PUBLISHING



Amazing launch offer
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Two stunning Ocean games – see p96

Amazing launch offer
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Shadowfire, Spy v Spy – see p92

The NEW Amstrads
Full details inside

130 GAMES TESTED

It's Amsyclopedia – we've eyeballed the lot!

WORDSTAR – Worth the extra cash?

EXPLODING FIST – the first Mastergame

DUN DARACH – We've mapped it

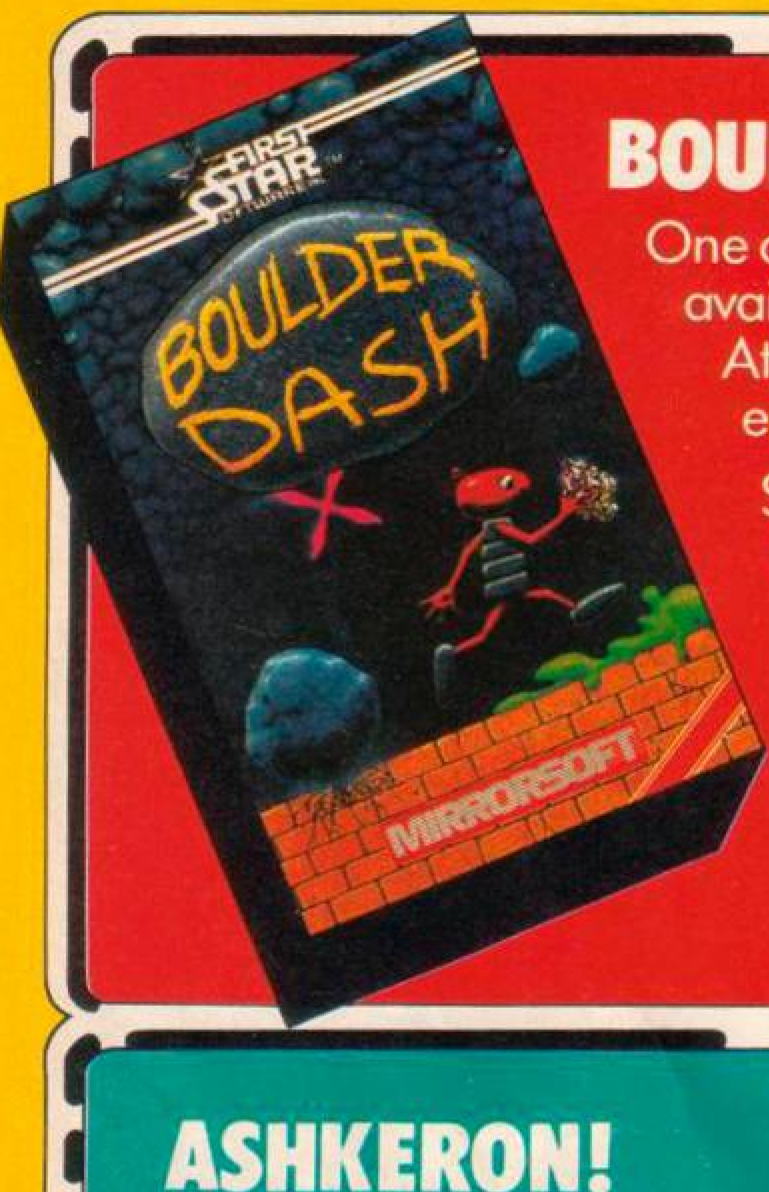
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DANGER!
Proceeding beyond this point could seriously affect your relationship with your Amstrad.
NOT an official Amstrad Cyclops!
Contents Page this way
WELCOME TO THE ACTION

MIRRORSOFT

SEPTEMBER SIZZLERS



BOULDER DASH

One of the great classic games of all time is now available to even more of you — Amstrad and Atari owners everywhere can now experience the ultimate underground journey.

Search through the 16 caves, each with 5 levels of difficulty, and collect as many jewels as quickly as possible. Don't forget to block the amoebas, transform the butterflies, or outmanoeuvre the fireflies — or you'll never get out alive!

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Amstrad CPC464 and Atari 48K versions back-to-back on one tape at £9.95.

ASHKERON!

'Ashkeron is something for everyone: a complex, challenging, witty game for the adventurer, and its got pretty pics for the zap'em crowd. An excellent game — buy it!' — *Home Computing Weekly*

'It is highly professional, sophisticated software... in its walls lies a challenge everyone will find interesting and rewarding' — *Crash Micro*

'This game gets my royal assent' — *Your Spectrum*

'A charming graphic adventure' — *MicroScope*

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With built-in competition!



MIRRORSOFT

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The 8th Personal Computer World Show

THE LINEUP

AMSTRAD ACTION OCTOBER 1985

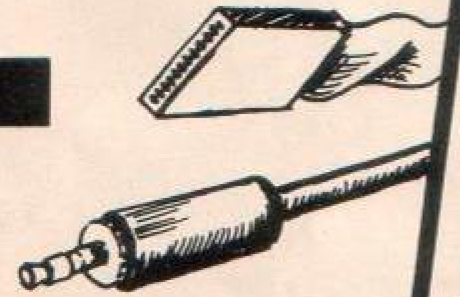


HOT REVIEWS

OCTOBER SPECIALS

JUICY OFFERS

ACTION REGULARS





GAMES TESTED

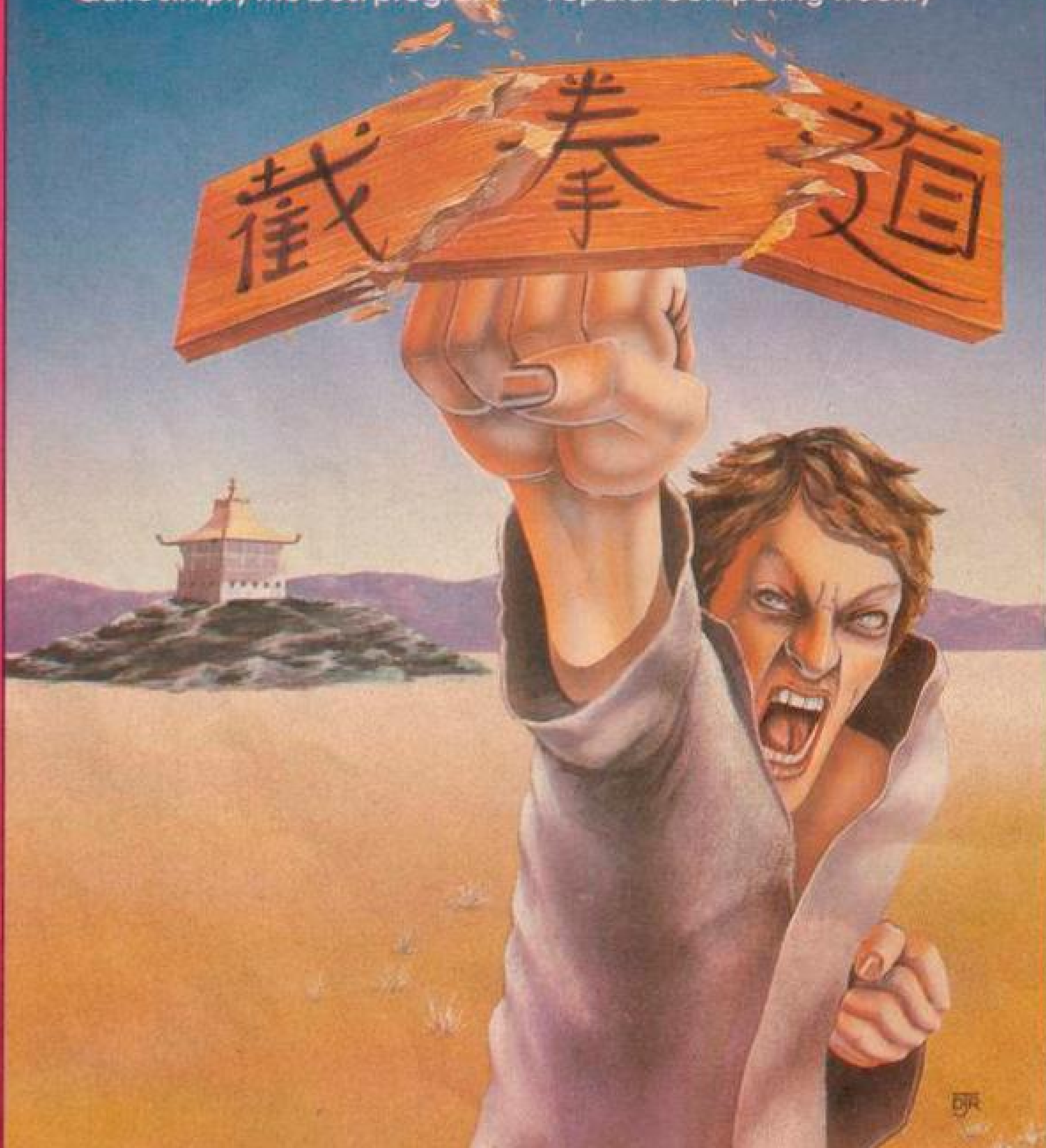
AMSYCLOPEDIA INDEX



THE WAY OF THE *exploding fist*

Become a master of this mysterious ancient art: progress from novice to Tenth Dan and test your strength and discipline. You can control your character with either joystick or keyboard - 18 different manoeuvres including blocks, flying kicks, leg sweeps, roundhouse and even somersaults!

Challenge the computer, facing opponents of progressively greater skill, or compete with a friend. THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST has it all - addictive competitive action, dazzling graphic animation and sound. The wait is over - you are about to face the challenge of a lifetime! "Spectacular, startlingly original epic, most televisual game I have encountered."- Daily Mail. "Quite simply the best program." - Popular Computing Weekly



"The graphics made my eyes pop out. Fantastic sound effects, state of the art animation and brilliant game play. One of those games that you can get out time and time again."

ZZAP

"Brilliantly designed and animated. The sound and brilliant music adds to the realism with pre-punch grunts and thwacks as you hit the ground."

COMMODORE HORIZONS

"Melbourne House's Fist is the most realistic and enjoyable computer combat games yet."

YOUR COMPUTER

"Truly spectacular, superb animation. One of the best games."

COMMODORE USER

"A blockbuster in all senses of the word. The graphics are just right, the sound is great too. Quite simply the best program I've seen."

POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY

"Spectacularly startling original epic. One of the most 'televisual' games I've encountered."

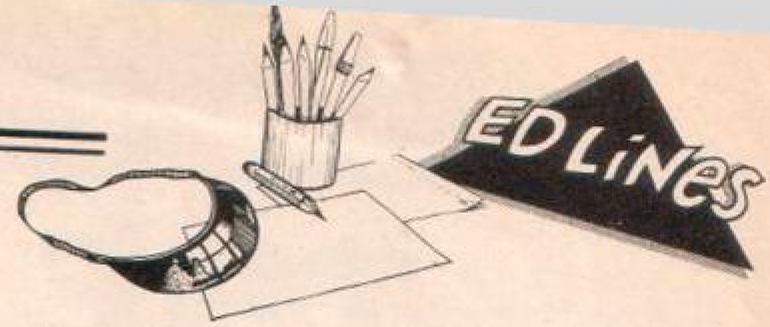
DAILY MAIL

"The graphics and sound are terrific and the only thing that stops this game short of total realism is blood."

ZZAP

from **MELBOURNE HOUSE**

AVAILABLE NOW FOR THE COMMODORE 64 AND AMSTRAD AT £9.95 AND SPECTRUM AT £8.95



So here it is at last – the real Amstrad megazine. The one you've been waiting for all this time. The one they never had in the newsagent's. Until now.

Well, you've made a wise decision in splashing a quid on Amstrad Action. Because down here in Somerset a dedicated team is working night and day to bring you everything you need to know – and some more besides – about your machine. Games, adventures, business programs, peripherals, news, views, competitions, adverts, misprintsit's all grist to our mill. After all, there's not a lot else to do in these parts but drink cider and watch the wurzels grow.

But don't be fooled by the rustic address. This magazine is actually produced by the latest technology. The quill is dead, long live the Amstrad, because that's what we write the magazine on, when we can get the electricity. Then our glorious prose is piped down a speaking tube on something called a modem. Back come reams of print-covered paper which we lick and slap down on cardboard. Out with the box-camera, a few hours of exposure and then it's all sent by pack-horse to a printer. Only weeks later Arnold-owners all over the country are fighting to get at copies of Amstrad Action.

Not a bad wheeze, is it? We certainly hope you get something out of it too, as well as a cheap laugh. An entertaining read, perhaps. Some useful info. . Authoritative opinions on games and biz progs (yes, that's what we call them). Latest news on the newest products. As well as competitions, subscription offers and a special mail-order deal. And remember – this magazine is written on the Amstrad, for the Amstrad, by the Amstrad Action team.

Pete Connor

The AA Team





Chris Anderson

Publisher and Proprietor. That means he owns the magazine and gets to pay all the bills, appear in court, get his mug shot at the top of the list, etc. A hard taskmaster but underneath he's just a hard taskmaster. The Ayatullah, as he's affectionately known, is the former editor of *Personal Computer Games* and *Zzap! 64* but has now seen the error of his ways and realised that owning magazines makes more sense than editing them. Heroes: Robert Maxwell, Rupert Murdoch.

Peter Connor

Editor. Another veteran of *PCG*, but much more grizzled than the others. Tells Bob Wade what to do after Mr. Anderson has told him what to do. Writes stuff like this. The man who put the apostrophe back in Bob Wade's reviews.



Bob Wade

Software Editor. Reviews games. Ex-*PCG*, ex-*Zzap*. Fervent convert to the Amstrad. Comes from Kent where he was winner of the Orpington Grotesque T-Shirt Award three years running. He's still running, they're still after him. Bob wields a nifty joystick but has trouble with a knife and fork. In his spare time he likes to relax from a hard day reviewing computer games by... playing computer games.



Trevor Gilham

Art Editor. Designs the magazine, pastes it up, draws pretty pictures. Recently left Bristol, where he was something of a pool shark. Maybe that's why he's always carrying a scalpel. Adores the countryside and lives in a picturesque cottage overlooking a petrol station forecourt.

COVER: by Trevor Gilham

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Somerset TA11 7PS
Tel: 0458-74011
(This is the address for all editorial matters and for subscriptions, but not for mail order or advertising.)

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COLOUR ORIGINATION: Wessex Reproductions, 325a Wells Road, Bristol BS4 2QB

PRINTING: Redwood Web Offset, Yeoman Way, Trowbridge, Wilts BA14 0

DISTRIBUTION: Seymour Press, 334 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AG



NEXT MONTH's Amstrad Action is out OCTOBER 10th. Don't miss it!!

ReAction needs YOU !

Controversy. Outrage. Indignation. Abuse. Praise. It wouldn't be a computer mag without them. Unfortunately, there's none of that on our letters page this month, mainly because we haven't got a letters page yet. But next month we start the astounding **ReAction**, where you, the readers, get the chance to express your praise, abuse, indignation etc. etc.

And there's an added attraction – writers of the letters we think are the most entertaining will each receive a FREE PIECE OF SOFTWARE! For the Amstrad. Not a bad offer, eh?

We really would like to hear from you. It gets lonely down here in the country. And if you can read, the chances are you can write as well. So it won't be too difficult, will it?

The address to scrawl to is:**ReAction, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS**

What makes us different

You may have wondered at the words on the cover proclaiming that we're not an official Amstrad magazine. They make an important point. This magazine is genuinely independent. We don't make any other product related to the Amstrad which could put us under commercial pressure when it comes to reviewing other people's goods. The magazine is owned and run by a small group of people interested only in producing a good publication in support of a good computer.

That's not the only difference you'll notice when you compare us to existing Amstrad mags. You'll also find we do a lot less on the technical, programming front, and a lot more in the way of helping ordinary, non-boffin users get the most out of their machine. Stick with us and we'll help your machine come alive.

THE AMSTRAD DOUBLE



Amstrad have launched a twin assault on the computer market this autumn with the announcement of not just one, but two new machines. At the same time the 664 has been dropped – after only five months of existence – and the price of the 464 has been slashed by £50.

The first of the machines is the CPC6128, the 128K computer already launched earlier this year in the US. It's based on the same Z80A processor as the 464 and 664, banks its memory in two 64K blocks, features a single 3 inch disk-drive and will retail at £299 with a monochrome monitor or £399 with colour. The micro runs CP/M Plus, allowing a large number of professional software packages to be used. Amstrad also say that it is compatible with 464 and 664 software.

The second – and more surprising – launch, is the PCW8256, a small business package which Amstrad boss Alan Sugar described as 'a revolutionary product'. For around £460 the buyer gets monitor and keyboard, 256K of memory, built-in disk drive and word-processing software and a printer. The machine has no colour or sound and is not compatible with existing Amstrad software.

Sandwiched between the announcements of these latest arrivals – and almost lost in the razzamatazz – came the news that the CPC664 has been ditched. 'It is,' said Alan Sugar, 'well and truly dead.' He explained its swift demise as being due to 'a leap in technology'.

As a result of the 6128's introduction the price of the 464 has been cut to become more competitive with lower-priced machines. With the green-screen it will now sell for £199 and with the colour monitor £299, prices which make it almost unbeatable value.

CPC 6128 – The Spec.

The 6128 is slimmer and altogether more stylish than than the 664. The disk unit is much smaller and is not raised so high above the keyboard. The keys are now in plain white and have been slightly re-arranged. Function keys are now at the top, while the cursors have been moved to the bottom. Control and Copy have both been placed on the left and the Enter key has been put at the bottom of the right-hand side. The keyboard has a much springier and more comfortable feel than the 664's. There are the standard cassette, joystick, and Centronics interfaces and also the facility to add an extra disk-drive.

What it boils down to is a souped up 664 with an extra 64K memory.

Processor:**Z80A**
RAM:**128K in two switchable banks of 64K**
ROM:**48K with Locomotive Basic**
Disk:**3 inch**
Operating System:**CP/M Plus and AMSDOS**
Keyboard:**74 keys, QWERTY layout**
Sound:**3 voices, 8 octaves**
Display:20, 40,or 80 columns. 640 x 200 pixels max
Connections:joystick, cassette, stereo sound, printer, expansion port, extra disk drive port
Price:£299 with monochrome monitor, £399 with colour monitor

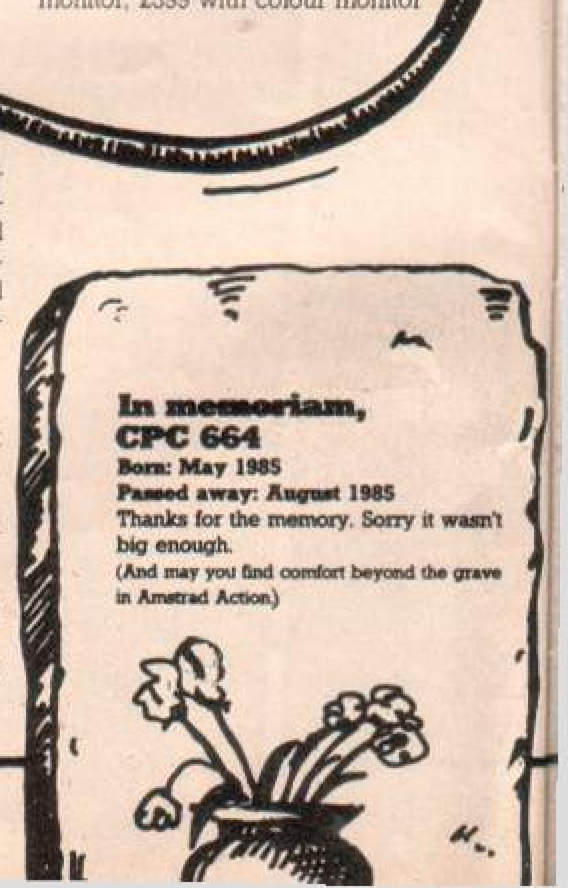
PCW 8256 – The Spec.

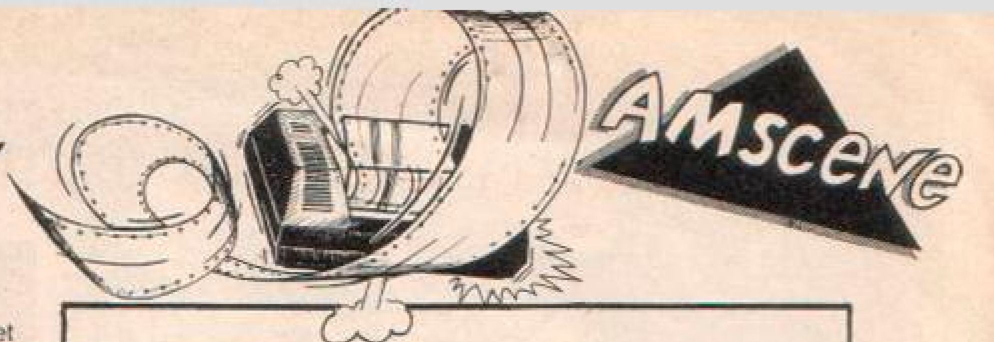
The PCW 8256 is 'definitely not a games machine', in the words of Alan Sugar. It has no colour, no sound and no software compatiblity with the other Amstrads. Its main selling-point is that it is a 'full-function word processing system', and to this end Amstrad have developed LocoScript – a word processor program which comes with the machine. This runs on 'pull-down' menus and offers cut and paste facilities, simultaneous editing and printing, and one-stroke entry for a variety of cursor movement.

Like the 6128, the PCW is an 8 bit machine using the Z80A chip. But it has 256K of memory, 112K of which is used as a RAM-disk – a 'fictitious disk drive' – to store information extremely quickly while programs are running. Again like the 6128 it runs CP/M Plus and so can use a wide range of business programs: Amsoft themselves are offering *Supercalc2* for £49.

The package comes in three sections – monitor, keyboard and printer – all of which are in white, rather than Amstrad's traditional black, plastic. The monitor is larger than usual, allowing a 90 column by 32 line display. The keyboard has a very responsive feel and is connected to the monitor by a single 'curly cord'. The dot-matrix printer has tractor feed but can handle single-sheet operation and is capable of reasonable quality print. A 3 inch disk-drive is built in to the monitor, and underneath is space for the insertion of a second drive to bring total storage capacity up to one megabyte.

Processor:Z80A
RAM:256K – 112K as RAM-disk
Software included: LocoScript word-processor, DR Logo, GSX(Graphics System Extension)
Disc:3 inch. Space for a second drive
Operating System:CP/M Plus
Monitor: Green screen, 90 x 32 display
Printer:20cps near letter quality, 90 cps draft quality
Price:£399 plus VAT(15%)





The software reaction

The initial response of the software houses to the new machines has varied from the enthusiastic to the lukewarm. One company went so far as to express downright annoyance at the axing of the 664, a sentiment doubtless shared by many owners of that machine. Most houses, though, are adopting a cautious approach – they're interested by the extra memory, but don't want to sacrifice compatibility with the 464.

Melbourne House's Paula Byrne summed up the general feeling when she said of the 6128, 'At the moment we have no plans. We'll see how it sells and then.' Gremlin's Ian Stewart was more optimistic. 'It opens a new field', he said. 'It should stimulate far better games – not necessarily bigger, but certainly better.'

Taskset's Paul Hodgson was of the same mind, saying that more K would mean larger adventures and better graphics in arcade games. But he was disappointed by the technology. 'They could have gone a lot further. They've missed an opportunity for new graphics and sound chips.' Taskset have no immediate plans to develop games specifically for the 6128.

Software houses producing more serious programs were more excited by both machines. John Campbell, author of Campbell Software's *Masterfile* and *Mastercalc*, said that the 6128 'sounds terrific from the punter's point of view' and added that he might well enhance his programs to take advantage of the extra memory. Of the 5286 he said 'It sounds very exciting. I wouldn't hesitate to write for it.' Simon Howarth of Tasman – producers of *Tasword* – felt that the company would seriously look at the possibility of writing 'a version of Tasword specifically for the 6128.' Micropower's Bob Simpson was also keen: 'We'll be looking to do versions of *Superpower* on both the new Amstrads', he said.

One person who doesn't have an opinion yet is Activision's Clare Trotter, who said 'It would have been nice if Amstrad had invited us to the launch.'



SUGAR SPEAKS

On the 6128: **'It's a slightly more serious machine. You can use it for serious business or for some star adventure. It will run things like Supercalc. It's definitely not a Mickey Mouse machine.'**

On why he has no plans to make a 16 Bit machine: **'Because no-one's explained to me yet why I should.'**

On the Amstrad philosophy: **'We're commercial, we're interested in volume sales. We're not interested in getting coverage in the computer mags as state-of-the -art technology. It doesn't put money in the bank.'**

On market share: **'We've got about 25% of the market, but I'm not really interested in market share. I could have 100% of the market in thimble holders but it wouldn't make me any money, would it?'**

On the 464: **'...the machine that everyone knows and loves – reputedly used by a well-known vacuum manufacturer to stock-control his cars.'**

On user-friendliness: **'The PCW 8526 comes with two manuals which allow even a wally like me to operate it.'**

The Showbiz Factor

In keeping with a venerable tradition, Amstrad launched the new machines at a showy press conference in central London complete with a 'personality' to guide the assembled hacks and dealers through the details. They chose newsreader Richard Whitmore, perhaps hoping that someone from the BBC would make us think we were listening to the Nine O'Clock News rather than a PR exercise.

Whitmore stood at a lectern at one side of the stage and started off by taking us through 'The Amstrad Story', or 'How a manufacturer of perspex hi-fi turntable lids became a company with a £100 million turnover'. Alan Sugar was introduced, to a ripple of applause. He told us about the 6128, announced the 464 price-cuts, and then left.

Back to Mr. Whitmore, who now engaged in a dialogue with a succession of actresses pretending to be Amstrad's computer competitors in the small business stakes. The first was a charming, if rather scatty, young lady who left the stage with a flea in her ear when we found out she'd cost £5,000. Far too expensive.

On came Charlie Chaplin, a man who advertises IBM computers, but who was here impersonated by a woman. As far as we could tell. He/she remained silent, while Richard Whitmore ruthlessly discovered that IBM were also a bit pricey. Exit Charlie, speechless.

The next contender was a cheeky cockney lady who told some jokes while fluttering her eyelashes. She's always breaking down, and she doesn't have a servicing contract. She had to go.

Then on to the stage walked the embodiment of the efficient secretary – smart business-suit, hair swept back, owlish specs. She seemed a bit stuck-up at first, but soon melted enough to make a few jokes – 'Mr. Sugar, he's such a sweetie.' It quickly became obvious that she was the new Amstrad, the PC8256, nicknamed Joyce – after Alan Sugar's secretary.

As Joyce warmed to the task of telling us her specifications she began to relax. First she took off her glasses. Then she undid her ribbon. Her long hair, free at last, tumbled over shoulders. By this time the audience were on the edge of their seats. Where would she stop?

Well, she stopped right there and was replaced by a video in which people from all walks of life explained what they wanted from a computer. All of them had microphone wires trailing from their ears. Many seemed to have French accents, but that didn't stop them from saying their piece.

Alan Sugar then returned to give details of the 8256 and to explain why it's a 'revolutionary product'. Questions were asked, answered, and finally the audience filed out to get their hands – at last – on the 20 or so machines which had magically appeared outside.

Wizard catch the Bus

Wizard's Lair from Bubble Bus should magically be appearing in the shops with Pot Hole Pete trying to escape from 250 screens on seven levels. He has to collect the four pieces of a golden lion in the treacherous depths of a subterranean cave network. You can summon up this wizard for £8.95 on cassette.

Slap Happy Anirog

Slap Shot from Anirog is an ice hockey simulation that puts the player on ice in a one or two player game. *Trivia* is a game based on the board game *Trivial Pursuit*. Both titles should be buzzing about the local computer store at the moment. *Slap Shot* is only £7.95 while *Trivia* is £9.95.

Coming from Anirog in October are *5-A-Side*, a football game with penalty shoot-out or 10 minute game, and *Jump Machine*, a games designer with several pre-recorded games and lots of options for redesigning.



DM Returns

Danger Mouse is saving the world again, this time from a plague of whoopee cushions produced by the factories of Baron Silas Greenback. DM has to shut down the eleven factories located in a maze.

In *Danger Mouse Making Whoopee!* the loveable rodent has more of a starring role than in the previous game (big-headed mouse probably wants more money too). Creative Sparks say the gameplay is much improved.

DM and company should be in the shops in October, when you can buy some whoopee for £9.95 on cassette.

Davis on Disk

Steve Davis Snooker from CDS has made it onto disk. The game is exactly the same as the cassette version but loads a whole lot faster. It works on both 664s and 464s with disk drives and will set you back £12.95.



US Gold Bonanza

The biggest software house in Britain is turning its attention to the Amstrad – with a vengeance. There are ten titles either programmed or under development that will blast onto the market at the end of this year, beginning of next.

First out is *Raid Over Moscow* which is once again causing quite a stir because of its controversial subject – zapping the reds. Hard on its heels is *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*, an infuriatingly addictive platform game.

Lined up for October is *Bruce Lee*, while in November *Dambusters*, *Impossible Mission*, *Goonies* and *Return to Oz* look set to hit the Christmas market. *Zorro* and *Beach-Head II* are also planned to arrive early next year. If that weren't enough Amsoft are also releasing the Sega titles *Spy Hunter*, *Tapper*, *Za on*, *Up'n'Down*, *Buck Rogers* and *Congo Bongo* although these are still being converted.

All cassette versions of the US Gold games will be £9.95. Amsoft will release the disk versions as well as the Sega titles on both cassette and disk.

The only game that may not see the light of day is *Pole Position* which, despite being fully programmed and ready to go, is subject to a legal wrangle that is currently preventing its release.

You can now pause for breath and try to take all that lot in. It looks like US Gold are throwing down the gauntlet to the other software houses for domination on the Amstrad.



Ocean draw First Blood

Ocean have secured the game rights to the latest Sylvester Stallone film, *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, and we should see an Amstrad version in October.

Rambo is the latest in the long line of 'all-American heroes'. He goes into south-east Asia to rescue a group of American prisoners-of-war and in the process manages to kill an awful lot of people with spectacular violence. He's even been mentioned in one of President Reagan's speeches as the sort of guy Americans should be proud of.

Jon Woods, an Ocean director, said the film provided 'enormous scope for computer graphic scenarios'. He added that Ocean were unworried about the publicity surrounding the film. To see if the game is as controversial will cost you £8.95.





Which Doctor on Who's Machine

A little time-travelling birdie tells us that despite temporarily disappearing from our TV screens Doctor Who is about to appear in glorious Amstrad graphics. Micropower, in association with the BBC, are immortalising the good doctor in his own bit of time-space RAM – *Dr. Who and the Mines of Terror*.

According to Micropower, the game takes place in 'a massive playing area' and is a kind of adventure with arcade graphics. It will come with a map to help the doctor and his friendly robot find their way through the reactor, the conservatory and many other areas. Numerous opponents are promised, but behind the whole business is the sinister Master.

Release is planned for October 10th, but you might have to be a Time Lord to afford it – £14.95 on cassette only.

Arnold Alive on Arrival

Amstrad have released figures of a recent survey on computer reliability in Wigan and the North West of England. Arnold had by far the best figures.

Based on 'dead on arrival' stock, and not including machines returned after 30 days, only 1.8% of Amstrads were returned compared with 30.6% of Spectrums, 17.4% of Commodore 64s and 11.6% of BBC B's. So who's alive in 85? Amstrad. Of course.

Geoff Capes meets the Zoids

Martech have tied up two licencing deals that look set to produce two very different games. The first is with Tomy, the manufacturers of Zoids, the robot monsters, and the second with Geoff Capes, the human monster.

The games are scheduled for release in mid-October and both have some heavy promotional support, with Tomy spending £1,500,000 on advertising the toys and Geoff making personal appearances. The details of the games aren't known yet but Zoids will attempt to recreate the violent and hostile environment of the toys, and you'll have to train Geoff to his peak so that he can enter HIS violent and hostile sporting environment.



007 on 464

The three part computer version of the latest Bond epic *A View to a Kill* is here at last. Oddly, events in the Amstrad game come in reverse order to those in the film, supposedly to make them more rewarding to the player since the first two sections have a points system and so allow the player to gauge his performance.

This means that good old James '007' Bond starts in a silicon mine beneath silicon valley in California, moves to City Hall where he has to escape a fire and ends up in a car chase across the streets of Paris.

The game is available on cassette or disk for £10.99 and £12.99 respectively.

SKYWAVE GO 3 WAYS

Skywave Software have announced a clever little plug-in called Multi-Port that provides an RS232 serial port, a 24 bit parallel port and a sideways rom card. Initially it will be available on the 464 with a Skycom Rom to plug into the rom card.

The Rom allows you to access Prestel and bulletin board displays via a modem, including a special Skytel bulletin board. The card allows two roms to be fitted, with Skycom as standard and space for one other of your choice.

The interface will be available from mid-September at a cost of £99.95.

Dragontorc Debut

Dragontorc is a new arcade adventure from Hewson Consultants featuring 'sensory animation'. It is set in a magical ancient Britain where Maroc the Mage battles Morag the Shapeshifter to find the five Crowns of Britain.

The 'sensory animation' is the life-like emotion with which each of over 50 characters is supposed to react. Sounds dangerous. You play Maroc, a mage of many powers who floats about the land in search of the crowns. The game sells for £7.95 and should be out now.



Arnold gets a Gremlin

Gremlin Graphics, like many other software houses, are planning an Autumn blitz on the Amstrad market. Their bomb-bays are full of what promises to be some pretty hot stuff. *Project Future* is a 256-screen arcade-adventure in which you have to escape from a spaceship. It should be out around now. *Rocco*, a boxing game, and *Wanted: Monty Mole*, a platform game, will be arriving soon.

Plans for mid-September to October include *Metabolis* and *Monty on the Run*, the successor to *Monty Mole*. *Project Future* will be reviewed in the next issue and like all the other Gremlin games will sell for £8.95 on cassette.

Just When You Thought It Was Safe To Walk The Streets...

PAWS



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TALKING AMSTRAD

Industry insiders natter about the machine with the future

It's quite an experience telephoning key people in the micro industry and asking them what they think of Amstrad computers. Such is the impact old Arnold's had in the last few months that everyone, well almost everyone, is positively bursting with praise for him. They're all talking Amstrad.



Herbert Wright, Firebird Software

"During 1984 if you were to expect big sales from a game you only had to release it on two different machines. At the end of 1985 it will become a basic necessity to have a third one in there as well, and that's the Amstrad.

So when we're working on a major project we always find time to sort out an Amstrad conversion – the same can't necessarily be said for other machines like the BBC and Vic 20.

One other thing I like about the machine – it's a marvellous boon not to be tripping over wires all the time."



Robert White, Durell Software

"My personal home computer is an Amstrad. As someone who used to sell Apple business systems I'd say that as a baby business machine, it's very impressive. Software-wise it's still got a long way to go. For example Tasword is very good for a home computer, but terrible next to something like Applewriter.

Similarly with the display. I find the 80-column screen hard to look at for long, but it's all relative. Compared to an Apricot it's weak, compared to a Commodore it's brilliant. Moving things on screen can be slow – you get a much better picture than on a Spectrum, but the extra screen memory involved slows you down. The Basic is brilliant, better than on an Apricot.

My personal hate in this world is the Commodore 64, it's so idiosyncratic. The Amstrad is a much better machine, but in terms of overall sales I don't think it'll ever overtake the 64 - I don't think the sales of ANY machine are going to be dramatic. The hardware market has reached its peak."





Matt Nicholson, Editor of What Micro?

"When we first looked at the Amstrad we thought immediately that it looked amazing value for money. It's a sort of hi-fi rack system for computers –you've got everything there. You can take it home, put on a plug, plug it in and you've got a computer system. Whereas if you've got a Spectrum or a 64 you've got to worry about cassette players and TVs and power supplies.

When we did a feature comaring the Amstrad 464 with the MSX computers, the Enterprise and the Memotech MTX we concluded that the Amstrad was the best all round value. In fact we're constantly recommending it. It's the only home computer I'd totally recommend as being certain to be around in a year's time. I think it could replace the Commodore 64. We'd only recommend the Commodore to somebody if they only wanted a computer for games. If they also want to do other things on it, then the Amstrad's a much better buy.

The Basic is very good – it's the only home machine to have got anywhere near the BBC for speed. It's also got good graphics, so there's no reason why you shouldn't get really good games developed for it. It's an excellent all round machine."

David Ward, Ocean Software

"My guess is that if the machine keeps growing at the rate it is, a new generation of significantly better software will get released for it. Programmers still haven't really got to grips with the machine's potential.

Although there are more 64 owners, the Amstrad user base is newer and more active – they buy more software. So software houses have got to be very interested. The only problem is how long the cassette-based machine is going to to be an attractive proposition. It's clear that a lot of software will be released on disk in future.

I suppose in a way they chose the wrong size disk for the machine. They should be using a 3.5 inch drive like everyone else, although no doubt they picked up the 3 inch drives very cheaply. It is a problem for software houses having to produce software on different format disks – it creates a lot of extra costs.

But we shall be actively supporting the Amstrad machines. Every release will come out on the Amstrad, hopefully simultaneously with the other versions. Our new range of Amstrad products are extremely good, and there are plenty more to come."



Tim Chaney, US Gold

"On a commercial basis I suppose it is one of the few pieces of hardware in 1985 that hasn't come under pressure for a price drop. It's remained a very stable and regularly selling piece of hardware. Software for it sells proportionately faster than for the Spectrum when you compare the relative size of the user bases.

It didn't start as strong as the Commodore 64 in terms of software available for it. But nowadays some of the conversions onto the Amstrad are very good, and the quality of the software is going to get better still – there are more big software houses writing for it."



Nick Alexander, Virgin Software

"We obviously see the machine with a warm glow because of the success of *Sorcery*. Of the three versions of the program we've done by far the biggest sales have been on the Amstrad – and it continues to sell strongly. The 664 was a very interesting development. It's the first cheap machine with a built-in disk drive, and will encourage the development of home software on disk with all the extra power that implies. We feel quite excited about the prospects for it.

From a technical point of view, if you compare the Amstrad with the Spectrum and 64, I think our programmers' attitude toward it is that it's superior – the leader of the pack. We have two programs under development for it and will continue to support it. Amstrad programs are much easier to get accepted by distributors than 64 software, and also we now have a good reputation among Amstrad owners."

David Gilbert, Dixons

"Dixons are now by far the biggest sellers of home computers in the country. I'm confident that we shall sell substantially more Amstrad machines this year than last.

We think the Amstrad products are very good. They're more reliable than most computers – I think that's a very important factor. It creates more confidence all round."

Special







Jeff Minter, Llamasoft

"It's quite a nice package – I haven't myself really got to grips with it internally, but it's a reasonable, entry-level package.

I don't know that we'll be converting many of my games to it. We have to be careful. My games have been designed to take advantage of Commodore hardware and might not work so well on the Amstrad. *Psychedelia* was different. Its principles can be applied to any machine."

Roy Carter, Gargoyle Games

"The conversion of Dun Darach on to the Amstrad took about ten days - that was the first time I'd used the machine properly, but it was an easy machine to get used to. It was pleasing to see the technical documentation being accurate. I only came across one discrepancy and that was sorted out for me very efficiently by the people at Amstrad.

When people start writing for it solely there could be some very interesting products brought out. But the way it stands at the moment, people are mostly going to write programs with other machines in mind.

Basically it's a very good machine and I enjoyed using it. It's a computer that does the job it's supposed to do and does it well."



Paula Byrne, Melbourne House

"We think Amstrad have done a fantastic job marketing the thing. They try things nobody else would try, and give them credit, it sometimes works. I have a great deal of admiration for the number of machines they've been able to get out. They've created an area of the market for people who wouldn't have otherwise thought of buying a computer.

We're totally committed to the machine. All our major releases are now coming out on Spectrum, Commodore and Amstrad. Commodore and Sinclair are still in such a powerful position that for someone like Amstrad to come in and make a big impact is a real achievement. It's a very healthy machine."

Ian Ellery, CRL

"When it first came out I thought: Oh no, another cheap, tacky computer that's been churned out. But after I'd played with it for a bit I thought: No, it's great!

I just wish they'd made it look different. I don't like the design at all, with all those grey and green keys. But compared to other machines it's got to be the best value around."

Mike Singleton, programmer and games designer

(eg Lords of Midnight)

"It's a machine I'd like to use. At the moment you can get more sales on the 64 and Spectrum, but I think that might change rapidly.

The graphics appeal to me greatly. You can do an awful lot more with them –certainly than on the Spectrum, and from what I've seen, you can get a cleaner, sharper picture than on the 64.

I'd also love to have a go with the stereo sound. Most of the games currently available on the Amstrad were originally written for some other machine, so they don't fully exploit that capability. I think an awful lot could be done with it, say in a shoot-em-up.

One other big point in the Amstrad's favour is that with its Z80 chip, it's much easier to convert a Spectrum game onto the Amstrad than onto the 64. In future what people will be doing is writing a program on both machines simultaneously."



THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

Melbourne House, £9.95 cass, joystick or joystick with keys or keys

MASTERGAME

This mega-ton rumble is surely one of the best-named games of the year and is certain to be one of the most-played. It gives you the task of taking on either a friend or the computer in deadly hand-to-hand combat using the techniques of karate.

The simulation is in 2D with the two combatants facing each other on the screen with a Japanese landscape in the background and a squatting Buddha-like judge. The player can fight using keyboard or joystick to simulate no less than 19 distinct moves against either a computer or human opponent.

These are obtained on the joystick by different combinations of stick position and fire-button activation. On the keyboard there are eight keys to press with or without the control key.

When playing the computer the aim is to score two full points by hitting him with kicks or punches and eventually to reach tenth 'dan' by defeating 20 opponents of increasing skill.

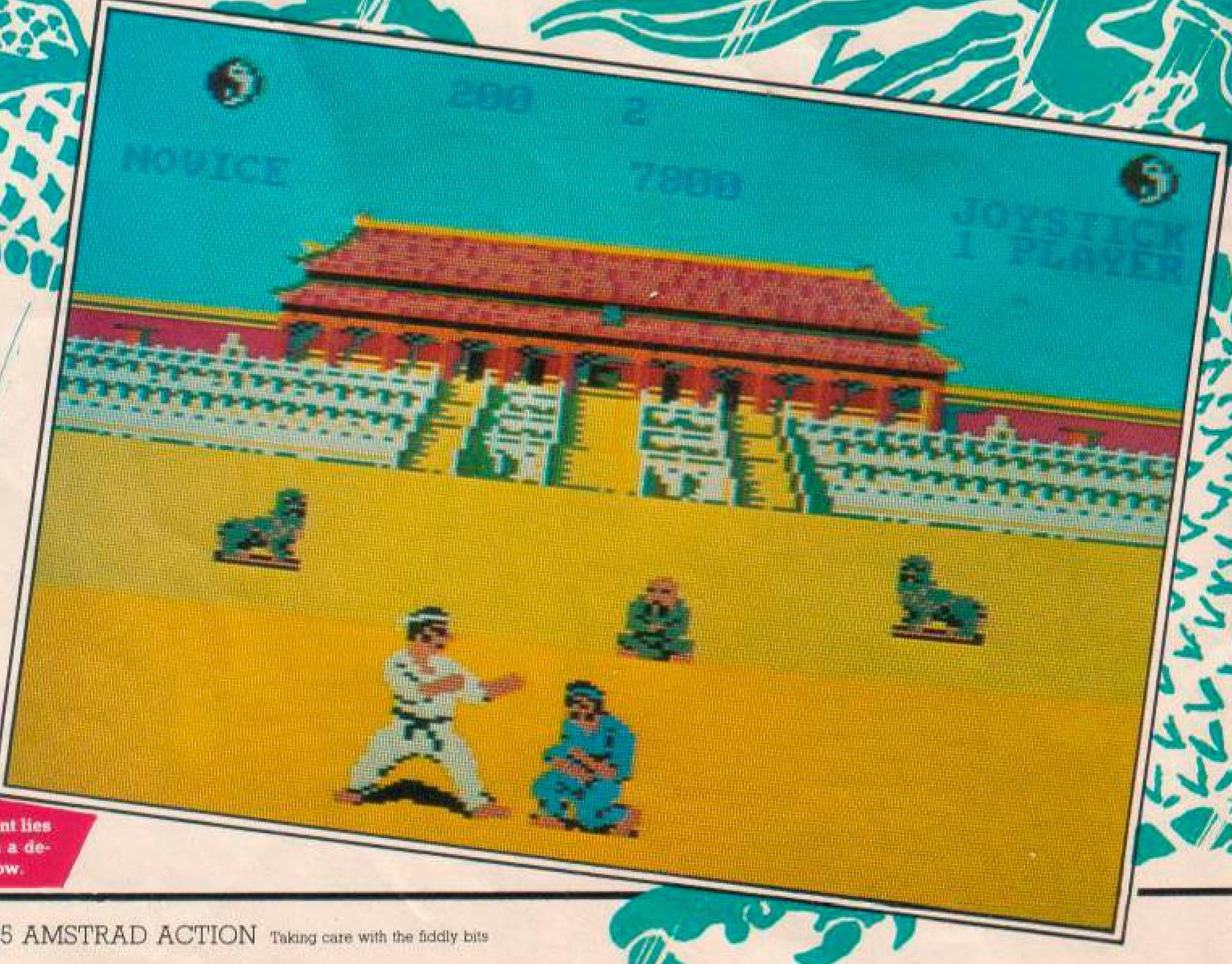
You begin as a novice and have to defeat two opponents to move up a dan. If you succeed in striking an opponent you are awarded either a full point or half point depending on the accuracy of the manoeuvre. Your score is displayed in the form of yin/yang symbols. It's really mystical, Grasshopper.

If a move succeeds you or your opponent will end up as a crumpled heap or flat out depending on the blow that was delivered. As well as yin/yang symbols, points are awarded and the harder the manoeuvre the greater the score. Thus after some practice it becomes a matter of not just dispatching opponents but of doing it with style.

In one-player mode there is a 30 second time-limit on bouts and if nobody has scored a full two points by the end of it the winner is whoever has most hits. The time-limit is the same for two players but it is purely a matter of who can score the most in that time over four bouts, rather than using the yin/yang points system.

If two players wish to join battle at least one of them will have to use the keys, but this should not prove to be a drawback since it is often easier to accurately make a particular move using keys. This will also bring much more unpredictability and length to the bouts since a human opponent can make things much tougher and much more exciting.

The animation on the fighters is excellent although the fight sounds aren't all they could be. Control is easy although perfecting it so that you can take on the computer's best is another matter altogether.



Your opponent lies flat out from a devastating blow.



You are doubled up by a simple mid kick.

A high kick is about to catch the blue fighter by surprise.



GOOD NEWS

- Brilliant character animation.
- Attractive screen display.
- Exciting two-player game.
- Terrific gameplay that is easy to learn but hard to perfect.
- Excellent range of moves and blows.
- Good computer opponents across many skill levels.
- Plenty of lasting challenge in the ten dans.

BAD NEWS

- No two-joystick option.

SECOND OPINION

You can almost feel the agony as a kick or a punch rips into a player's guts - or an even more painful anatomical region. The one-player game is good but the real fun starts when two people scrap it out. There's genuine skill involved in mastering the moves and the complex tactics that have to be employed in combat. The game's a smasher.

PC



A flying kick makes contact in spectacular fashion.

GRAPHICS	92%
SONICS	64%
GRAB FACTOR	96%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	94%



A back somersault flips you out of your opponents reach.

THE 19 WAYS OF THE FIST

JUMP: a leap in the air to avoid low kicks.
CROUCH: sneaky position from which several moves can develop.
HIGH PUNCH: leaves you vulnerable if you miss.
WALK FORWARD: advances you into the fray.
JAB: used close in – very fast.
LOW PUNCH: obtained from crouch – surprise move. Not illegal.
BACK SOMERSAULT: flips you backwards out of danger.
FORWARD SOMERSAULT: flip over your opponent and attack from behind.
WALK BACKWARDS: retreat from enemy. Loses face.
BLOCK: automatic or in response to opponent's strike.
FLYING KICK: very spectacular – if it succeeds.
HIGH KICK: catches opponent on head but calls for accurate positioning.
MID KICK: good early tool against unskilled opponents.
SHORT JAB KICK: good for close work and when opponent is in middle of move.
FORWARD SWEEP: highly effective when executed from crouch and you can keep your distance from opponent.
BACKWARDS SWEEP: vicious after forward somersault.
HIGH BACK KICK: also very effective after forward somersault.
ROUNDHOUSE: difficult to time but good points scorer.
ABOUT-FACE: half-roundhouse that turns you 180 degrees.





BOULDERDASH

Mirrorsoft/First Star, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys



The name describes perfectly what it's all about – there are lots of boulders and you really have to dash.

It's set in some diabolical underground cavelayout on each of the levels but are all surrounded by an indestructible metal barrier. There are also other objects present such as the jewels you collect, fireflies, butterflies and amoebas.

You control Rockford, a stick-insect figure with an impatiently tapping foot, who has to collect jewels by running into them . On each screen you have to collect a certain number of them within a time limit before an exit door will start to flash and you can move to the next screen. You can move through the earth but the boulders pose more problems. These are subject to gravity and if one drops on your head it crushes you. They can also trap you in a spot where you can't get out or block off your route to an essential jewel. You can push boulders about, though, and even stand directly underneath them.

> SECOND OPINION
>
> *I was really grab-factored by this one. It's one of those rare ideas that will trap even the virulent anti-gamester by its mixture of brilliant simplicity and sophisticated execution. Graphics are superb, the sound is atmospheric and I was even quite taken with the scrolling. An instant classic.*
>
> PC

On some caves things get even tougher because of the presence of fluttering butterflies and pulsating fireflies that will explode on contact with you. These both move along the tunnels in the earth with butterflies turning right whenever they come to a turning and fireflies always turning left. But these nasties do have their uses – if you can drop a boulder on them a butterfly will turn into nine jewels while a firefly will just explode, clearing a small space of everything except metal cavern wall.

Amoeba and magic walls appear on some screens and produce some fascinating effects. The amoeba is a green blob that grows with the passage of time to fill any surrounding earth. It can be used in two ways: a butterfly will explode on contact with it to produce jewels, or if you can completely enclose it with boulders so it has nowhere to grow it will also turn into jewels. The trouble with the amoeba is that it can grow at different speeds, either too fast or too slow for your purposes. If it gets too large it will turn into boulders.

Magic walls look like ordinary walls but when you drop a boulder through them into a cavity below, it will transform them into jewels. You don't have it all your own way though, since the wall will only activate for a short period of time and jewels dropped through it will reconvert into boulders.

After every four screens there are single screen intermissions posing quickie problems to be solved in order for you to get a few jewels. They always have a short time limit and you can't lose a life on them. Extra lives are awarded every time you score five hundred points up to a total of nine lives. The points value of a jewel varies with each screen but in some caves you can score lots of points towards new lives.

The 16 screens keep the same basic layout over the five levels but the positions of boulders, jewels and creatures will alter to make things gradually harder. All the caves are very colourful but most importantly feature some real brain-aching problems to be solved in order to get jewels. The sound effects are good with explosions, the crash of falling rocks, the tinkle of tumbling jewels and the scrape of Rockford's feet. The scrolling is good too although it isn't 100% smooth.

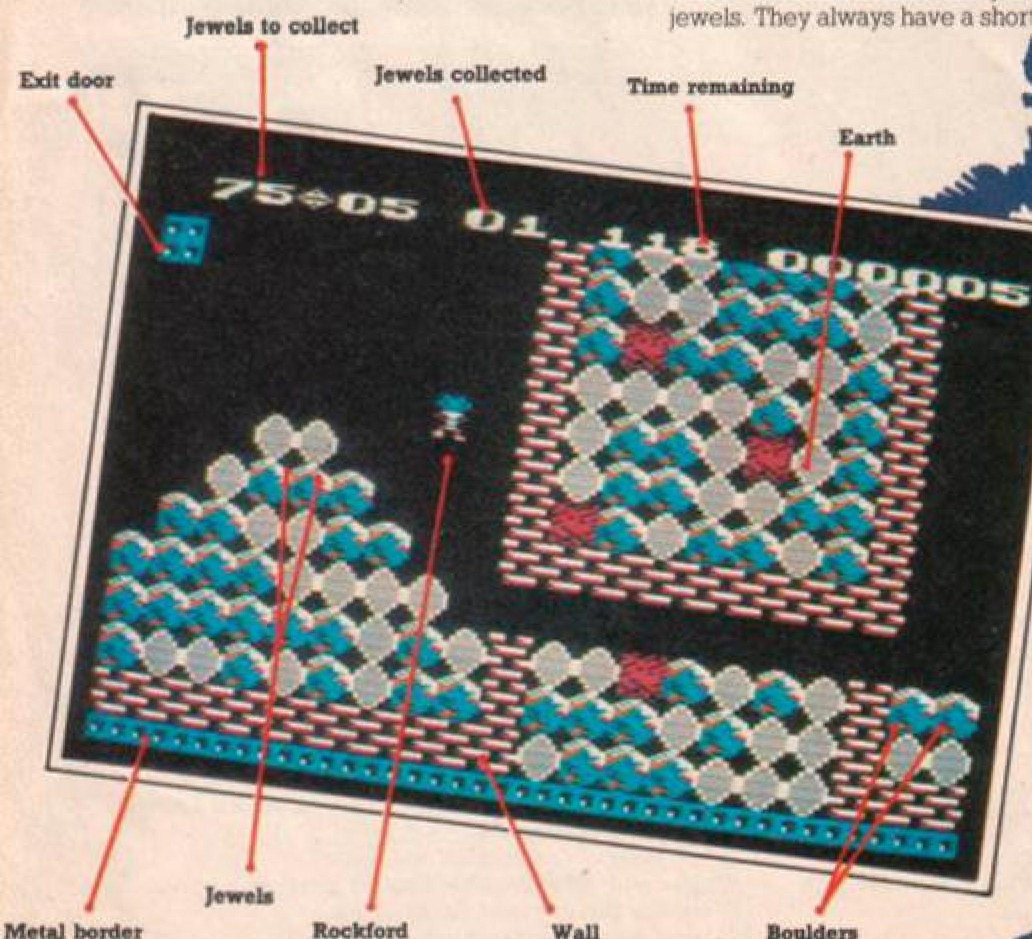
G O O D   N E W S

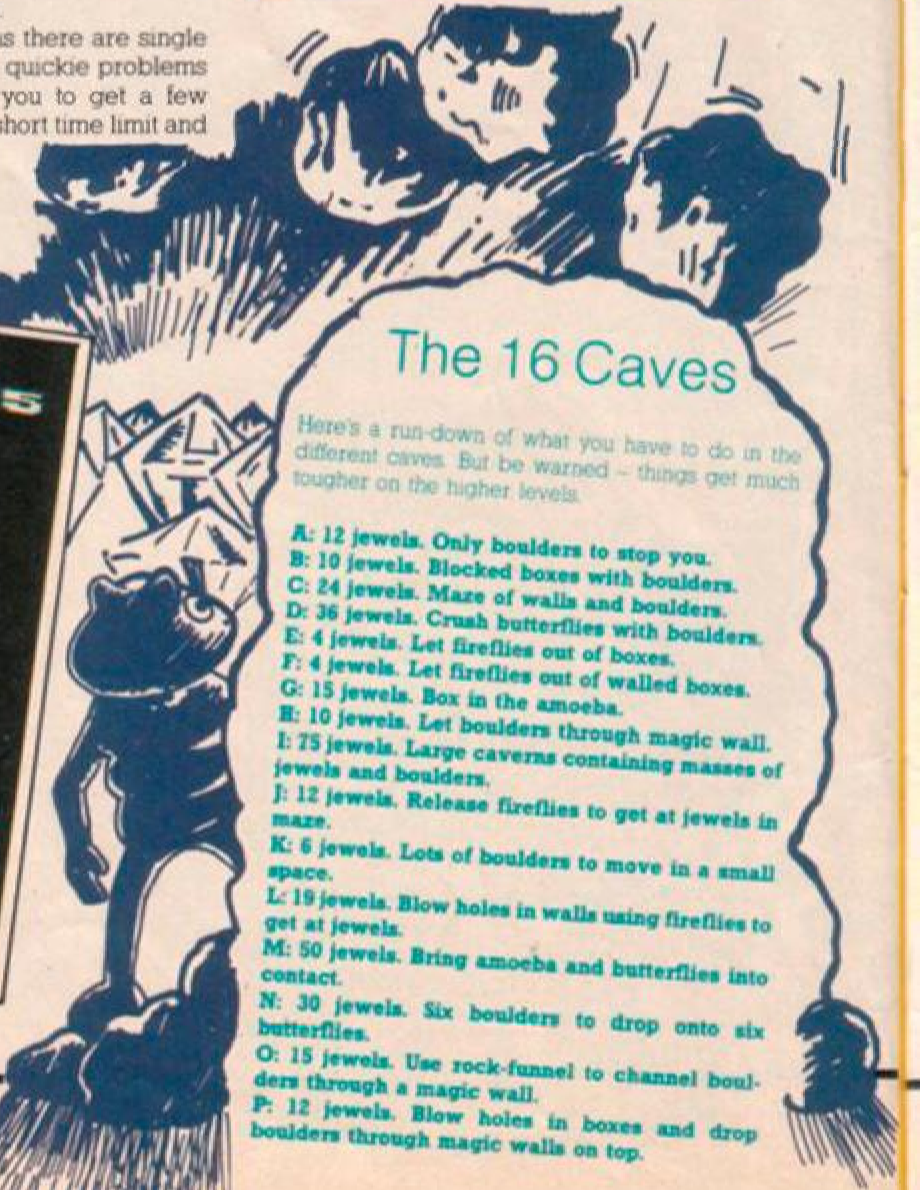
- Terrific cave graphics.
- Good sound effects and title music.
- Lots of diabolically difficult screens.
- Perplexing problems in the midst of hectic action.
- Tremendously addictive as you fight your way through the screens.
- Imaginative screen designs and creatures.

B A D   N E W S

- Scrolling isn't perfect.

GRAPHICS	88%
SONICS	83%
GRAB FACTOR	95%
STAYING POWER	94%
A A RATING	93%





The 16 Caves

Here's a run-down of what you have to do in the different caves. But be warned – things get much tougher on the higher levels.

A: 12 jewels. Only boulders to stop you.
B: 10 jewels. Blocked boxes with boulders.
C: 24 jewels. Maze of walls and boulders.
D: 36 jewels. Crush butterflies with boulders.
E: 4 jewels. Let fireflies out of boxes.
F: 4 jewels. Let fireflies out of walled boxes.
G: 15 jewels. Box in the amoeba.
H: 10 jewels. Let boulders through magic wall.
I: 75 jewels. Large caverns containing masses of jewels and boulders.
J: 12 jewels. Release fireflies to get at jewels in maze.
K: 6 jewels. Lots of boulders to move in a small space.
L: 19 jewels. Blow holes in walls using fireflies to get at jewels.
M: 50 jewels. Bring amoeba and butterflies into contact.
N: 30 jewels. Six boulders to drop onto six butterflies.
O: 15 jewels. Use rock-funnel to channel boulders through a magic wall.
P: 12 jewels. Blow holes in boxes and drop boulders through magic walls on top.



LOCO-MOTION

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick or keys

Based on the obscure arcade game *Guttang Gottong* and similar to *Confuzion* this puzzle game sets you a diabolical task on 10 screens. You have to guide a train to its destination along a track without letting it run into a dead end.

Each screen is composed of a grid of squares on which are drawn lengths of railway track. A train starts at the base of the screen and chugs its way up the left hand side until it enters the grid at the top left. Your job is to get it to the bottom right of the grid where it can get back to the station again.

You have to move the track sections into position by shifting them around using a single space, much as in a letter square puzzle. The sections come in several shapes with curves, straights (vertical and horizontal) and crossroads. These have to be made into one continuous track which can be as long or as short as you like, as long as it doesn't have any dead ends and leads to the exit track.

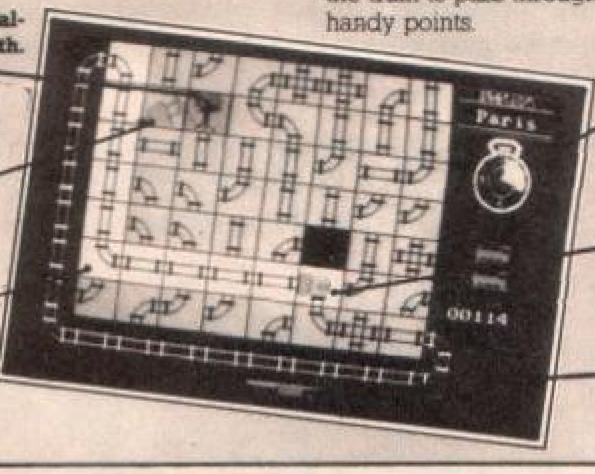
> SECOND OPINION
>
> ***This game railroads you into addiction. It's neither original nor sophisticated, which is perhaps why few people can resist its appeal. Once you sit down to a game you don't pay much attention to the outside world. Frenetic and exciting.***
>
> PC

The layout of each of the ten screens is always the same but sometimes blocks may appear with an impassable hazard on them. Rocks, trees and people can all block the track and if they form part of your usual route it will force you to act fast. Bonuses in the form of coal or water may also crop up and if you can get the train to pass through them you can pick up handy points.

As the train passes along the track it turns squares yellow, for which you score points. However you still may have time to move them so that the train can pass over them again. If the train gets to its destination then you score more points as each of the squares you passed through is counted off.

If you get in desperate trouble you can halt the train for one minute while you shift blocks. The problem is that the clock doesn't reset for each track, but only when you lose a life. This happens whenever you hit a dead end, be it block or the edge of the grid. Up to four players can take part but going number four does give you an advantage.

BW



G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ Tough puzzling action.
- ▶ Great screen designs.
- ▶ Enough time to think but little enough to keep you under pressure.
- ▶ Plenty of layouts to keep you going.

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ Very similar to *Confuzion*.
- ▶ Won't suit all tastes.

GRAPHICS	64%
SONICS	43%
GRAB FACTOR	76%
STAYING POWER	73%
A A RATING	76%

ROCK RAID

Kuma, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

If you thought *Asteroids* was dead then think again, because this is a colourful version with a few little extras. It's the same basic game of blasting rocks to bits in deep space but there are a few more aliens and skills to cope with.

At the beginning the screen just has your ship and three asteroids whizzing around. You can rotate left and right and thrust in pursuit of the rocks. Your bombs splinter large asteroids into two medium rocks which also subdivide when hit. If you can shoot these they vaporise into space dust.

Your ship is vulnerable to any of these colourful, spinning lumps and the slightest brush will splatter you all over screen in lots of little pieces. If you should succeed in knocking out all the rocks they appear in greater numbers and different colours.

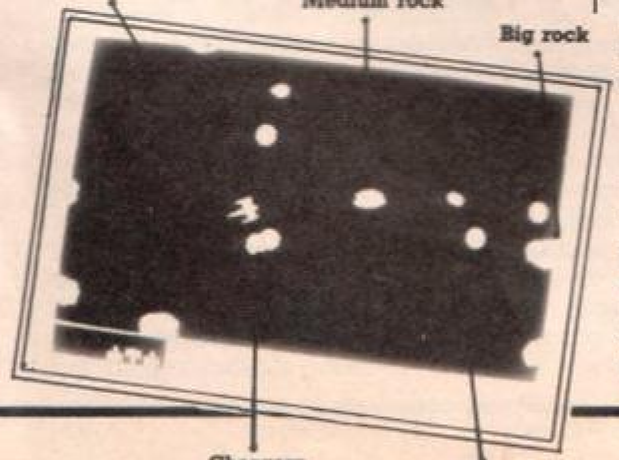
You are aided by a special option to be used in emergencies which will give you one of six functions. These are hyperspace, flipping 180 degrees, reverse thrusting, smart bombing, a shield or a lucky dip that gives you any one of the other five at random.

> SECOND OPINION
>
> ***A game that oozed nostalgia. You load it up, see what it is, groan and have a desultory blast. Then you remember why games like this got you hooked in the first place and you start smashing those rocks and hyperspacing and smart-bombing and before you know what's happened you've been playing for hours. Most enjoyable.***
>
> PC

The alien ships come in five types, all with different characteristics.

The rock graphics are bright although the animation on your ship isn't particularly good. The explosions look and sound quite good but the main attractions of the game are the features that make it a very tough challenge and a hectic blast.

BW



G O O D   N E W S

- ▶ Colourful rocks and aliens.
- ▶ Good range of extra options.
- ▶ Demands fast reflexes and great concentration.
- ▶ A very tough game.

B A D   N E W S

- ▶ Overlapping graphics aren't very good.
- ▶ Not very original.
- ▶ Screens don't vary much – just get harder.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	36%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	65%

DRAGONS

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Far from being a mythological beast, dragons are, it seems, plentiful enough for you to crush them beneath their own eggs. This is your task on 20 screens of floating platforms, which you have to rid of all dragons.

> SECOND OPINION
>
> ***The eggs are disgusting. Otherwise the graphics are quite pretty, but sometimes very indistinct – two yellow drâgons together = one smudge. Controlling the character is tricky and I found the game ultimately a frustrating experience.***
>
> PC

Which wrod-processor?

Wordstar takes on the field

The world-famous word-processing package WORDSTAR has arrived on the Amstrad. Chris Anderson takes a long, hard look to see how it compares with the existing disk-based processors. Is it really worth the extra cost?

This isn't so much a review as a tale of excitement, frustration, disappointment and hope. Such is the way with word-processors. In theory they're superb time-savers, one of the best uses to which a home computer can be put – and the Amstrad machines are ideally suited. In practice they can cause unbearable annoyance and in the extreme are capable of rendering worthless huge chunks of your time.

It was planned from the start to produce this magazine entirely on Amstrad keyboards. So obviously a priority was to track down the best word-processing prog available. At time of writing there are only three which can claim serious attention from serious users, and at one stage or other in the magazine's history all three have been used.



POCKET WORDSTAR
MicroPro/Cumana, £119.95 disk only

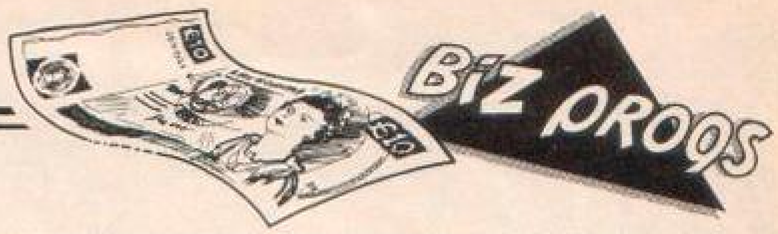
First of all don't be misled by the title. I reckon the word "pocket" is there mainly to prevent annoyance in users on other machines who've paid over twice as much for Wordstar. Certainly all the significant program features are there. The only serious limitation in Wordstar-on-the-Amstrad is on the size of blocks of text you can move round all at once – only about 50 words, a small paragraph. But for most users that won't often be an annoyance.

Wordstar is probably still the world's most widely-used word-processor. It runs under the CP/M operating system and has therefore been easy to transport onto a vast range of different micros. In time it's earned itself the reputation of offering just about every facilitiy anyone could want from a word-processor, short of actually typing the document itself.

This in itself could cause a problem for many people. The program is vastly complicated. There's a 200-page manual, and well over 100 commands to get to grips with. Frankly, it's not the best program to start on from scratch. If you only want a word-processor to write the odd letter or report, buy Tasword, or even Database's excellent value-for-money package Mini Office. Wordstar is for professional use. It's for people who regularly have to have to sit long hours at a keyboard who can therefore afford the investment in time and money to get and understand the best word-processor going.

Having said that, the designers have taken great care to make things as easy as possible. The manual is superb. clearly written and well cross-referenced. This is backed up by a card giving all the options available and a comprehensive series of on-screen help menus, which, when you're familiar with the program you can gradually dispose of (the help level can be set from 0-3).

What makes the program special is its detail. Other Amstrad word-processors offer many of the same basic features, but not with the same fleixbility. For example Wordstar's find-and-replace function allows you to search for any string of up to 30 characters and replace it with any other such string. The strings can include spaces, and linefeed-returns. You can specify whether the program halts at each replacement seeking your confirmation, or whether it does the lot automatically. You can specify whether the search takes place forward or backwards from the cursor position, whether capital and lower-case letters should be treated as different, how many different replace operations should take place, and whether the string being found must be a complete word.



Yet you do not have to spend any extra time selecting these options – you're not forced to go through a series of menus making appropriate selections, you can jump straight to a straight-forward search and replace if you wish. Finally, if you choose the wrong command, you can stop its execution at any stage.

This type of detail and flexibility applies throughout the program, the philosophy being, if you want it, it's there, if you don't it won't get in the way. If you can spend the time getting to know what's there it can make a big increase in program power.

A more immediate bonus compared to the other programs is the joy of easy insertion. As I write this paragraph now, using Wordstar, I can spot a mistake in the previous one, zip the cursor up there, pop in a few extra words, and return to this point in a matter of seconds. Any reformatting required can take place almost instantly. This one fact alone is enough to ensure that Amstrad Action's writing team is now transferring to Wordstar.

Tasword's customisation features are matched by the ability to use a separate program to install your own personalised version of Wordstar. This allows the inclusion of special printer control codes and numerous other options. Also included in the package is a mailmerge program of similar detail to Wordstar itself.

The only remaining drawback is one of the program's size. If you're using a single-drive system your disks will only have 50k free per side – a lot better than Microscript, but a lot worse than Tasword. But there again, if you can afford Wordstar, you probably ought also to splash out on a second disk drive. If you do, you'll have at your disposal a word-processor you'll probably never need to upgrade.

MICROSCRIPT
Amsoft, £49.95 disk only

The one thing I am grateful for about Microscript is that I didn't have to pay for it. A friendly shop-assistant at Curry's agreed to bundle it with my 664, since the promised free games disk was missing. In retrospect I think I'd have rather had the games.

My first shock came when I checked out the length of the various program files on the disk – including the CPM operating system they total some 160k leaving just 20k available to store text files. Although in theory you could split some of the program-parts onto another disk, thiscauses annoying complications and you end up spending all your time disk-switching. So effectively, unless all your documents are under 20k (about 3500 words) and you don't mind spending a fortune on disks, the program is near useless on a single-drive system.

The next shock comes when, having made yourself a working copy using various CPM utilities, you run the program and select from the main menu the option to create a new document. Your drive whirrs, a message says "please wait" and finally up comes...a blank screen! No indication of the margins, no status line, no information on basic editing commands, no on-screen help of any kind. Just a cursor to show where words will appear when you start to type.

This means you have to rely entirely on the manual to work out how to use the program, and unfortunately the manual itself is seriously flawed. Sometimes commands are introduced without saying how these commands are actually called up. Infuriatingly this applies to the only complete list of program commands printed at the back of the manual.

Another major gripe concerns the severe problems Microscript poses in getting your text formatted properly. A typical word-processor user will regularly be returning to earlier parts of a document he's typing, to insert extra material or to make deletions. Once he's finished he will want the remainder of the document to be moved down or closed up accordingly. A good word-processor will do this automatically. Not so Microscript. Editing a document will usually leave you with lines in the middle of a paragraph containing only a couple of words. Getting rid of the ragged look is an astonishingly complicated business.

First you have to save your document on disk in order to return to the main menu (whirr, whirr, please wait). Then you select the "Reformat" option (whirr, whirr, please wait). Next you have to type in the name of your document again, if you can remember it (whirr, whirr, please wait).When at last it reappears on screen, you must reformat each paragraph individually, before going through another series of disk accesses to return to editing mode.

I found it almost beyond belief that one should be expected to go through this rigmarole each time reformatting (or search and replace or moving a block of text) is required. But what is even worse is that the Reformatting program appears to contain a fatal bug – it crashes. On several occasions attempts to reformat more than about five paragraphs in a single session resulted in the screen clearing and the following message printed: "Unrecoverable error has occurred. Please refer to dealer." And yes, you've guessed, it's impossible then to return to the document you've been working on. Too many such occurrences can lead one to an early demise.

I won't say any more about this program. It isn't all bad – locked away in there somewhere are some moderately sophisticated features which permit clever programming applications. But these will be way outside the scope of the vast majority of users. The designers appear to have forgotten that sophistication is of little value if the basics are up the creek.

TASWORD 464D
Tasman Software, £24.95 disk, £19.95 cass

(Also available from Amsoft as Amsword)

After struggling with Microscript for a week or so, Tasword was good news. Despite it's relatively modest price it offers the vast majority of features most people want from a word-processor. What's more it's easy to get to know. Its manual, as manuals go, is very clearly written and there's plenty of on-screen help, including, at the touch of an Escape key, a summary of every available command.

One big advantage it enjoys over both Microscript and Wordstar is that it's a shorter program. This means there's plenty of space in memory for long documents to be worked on (over 3000 words at once) and plenty of space on disk for them to be stored in – around 150k. Indeed you can readily save Tasword files on disks which don't contain the program itself, allowing the full 180k per side of disk. This makes it very suitable for people with access to only a single disk drive.

A further excellent feature of the program is the way you can customise it to suit your requirements. For example, if your printer has special features accessed by specific codes, you can assign these tospecial "printer control characters" of your choice.

The customisation also allows you to program keys on the numeric pad to output whole words or sequences of characters at a single touch. And you can adjust such matters as default page layout, screen-colour and even parts of the help screen. When you're done, the program quite happily offers you the option of saving the new version, despite the obvious risk this incurs of facilitating piracy. The needs of honest users have been put first.

Another good feature on the disk version is a mail-merge facility which allows, for example, a letter to be printed 20 times with a different name and address inserted each time. Also, a Tasword-compatible spelling checker is about to be released.

Despite all this, there are a couple of serious annoyances. The main one is similar to a fault in Microscript: inserting extra text inside a document is an unnecessarily fiddly process. Having moved the cursor to the right position, you must first press Control-I to open up space to type in, then type your insert, then press Control-J to reformat the paragraph correctly. What is more the actual reformatting takes place very slowly – words are moved into position one at a time. The novelty wears off after a bit. Woe betide you if you ever have to reformat a long document to a narrower margin width.

A further niggle concerns the search and replace function. You can only search for a "word", that is, a string of characters marked off at either end by a space. This rules out many typical uses of the function. For example, you cannot search for phrases, or the starts of paragraphs.

Despite these points, the program remains a powerful one – good enough for the bulk of this issue to be typed using it, even if the editor has been heard to curse its existence from time to time.

How they compare

WORDSTAR: Good news

* The only fully-professional wordprocessor on the Amstrad.
* Over 100 separate commands covering almost every conceivable editing requirement.
* Detailed help menus to guide you through every aspect of the program.
* Complete flexibility over printed output – you decide.
* Separate installation program allows you to customise the program to your taste – and that of your printer.
* Clear, comprehensive 200-page manual.
* Sophisticated handling of files, combining speed and flexibility.
* Includes professional mailmerge program.

WORDSTAR: Bad news

* It costs a lot more.
* The sheer complexity of the program will hinder users with fairly straight-forward needs.
* On a single drive system, only about 50k per disk is available as space for documents.
* The size of blocks of text which can be moved in a single operation is limited to around 50 words.

TASWORD: Good news

* Combines reasonable price with most features you need.
* Easy-to-learn editing controls.
* Superb, easy-to-use customisation features.* Clear, well-written manual and good on-screen help.
* Works well on a single disk system.
* Satisfactory mailmerge program included.

TASWORD: Bad news

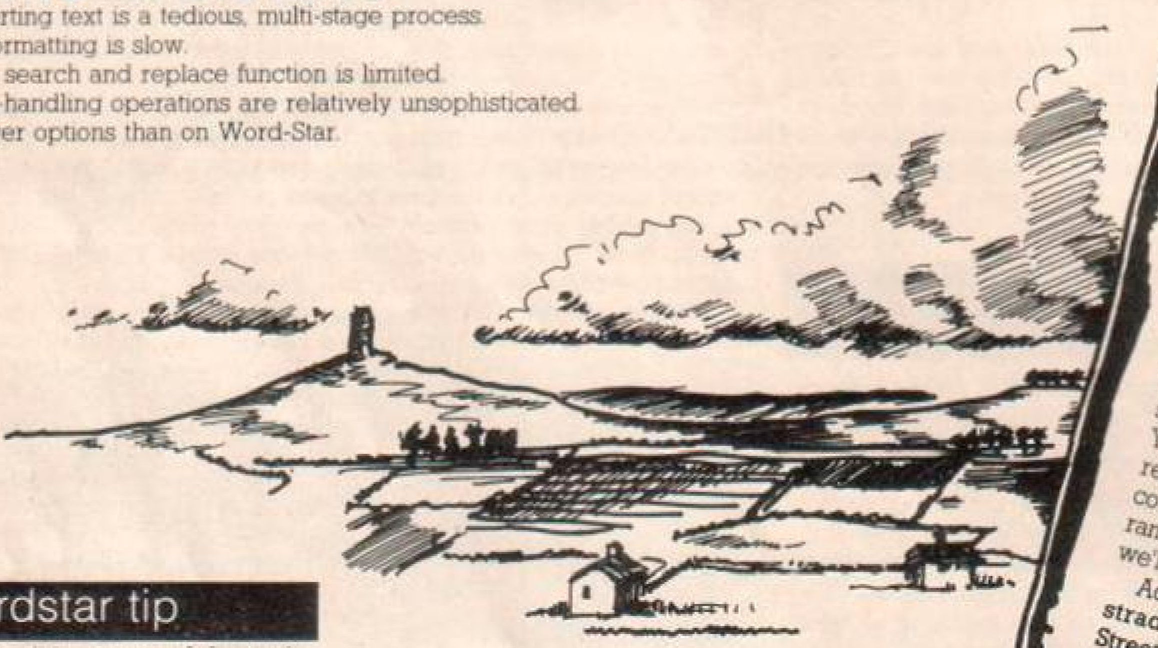
* Inserting text is a tedious, multi-stage process.
* Reformatting is slow.
* The search and replace function is limited.
* File-handling operations are relatively unsophisticated.
* Fewer options than on Word-Star.

MICROSCRIPT: Good news

* Could prove useful to programmers with unusual word-processing requirements.

MICROSCRIPT: Bad news

* Extremely user-UNfriendly – for example, no indication on screen of commands you type.
* Clumsy editing commands which result in ragged-edge paragraphs.
* To reformat, search/replace, or move blocks of text, you must first save your file and then load in a new program – tedious.
* Extremely awkward to use on a single-disk system.
* Unhelpful manual – very hard to discover how to input certain commands.
* Our version contained a serious bug.
* Seriously over-priced for what's on offer.



Win a flagon of cider!

Here's a chance for you to experience at length the taste of the heart of Somerset. We want to tap your experience of using serious software and pass on any tips (short-cuts, frustration savers, etc) you may have on specific programs. So each month, in an astonishing fit of generosity, we're giving away a flagon of genuine Somerset cider to the person who sends us the best piece of advice. You should try to keep the tips reasonably short, but they can cover any serious Amstrad program you like. The ones we like, we'll print.

Address them to: Biz tips, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.

Wordstar tip

One possible source of frustration with Wordstar is the fact that you have to use Control-key commands to do just about everything, including moving the cursor round the document – you can't use the cursor keys in the simple way that, say, Tasword allows you to.

But there's a neat way of getting round that problem, using the SETUP program to be found on your CP/M disk. This effectively allows you to redefine the values output by different keys to suit your requirements.

Try entering the following commands in the keyboard translation menu:

a 8 19 1 141
a 0 5 18 142
a 2 24 3 143
a 1 4 6 144

Then under keyboard expansion strings, enter the following (Control-Qs means pressing Control and Q simultaneously, followed by the letter s):

a 13 Control-Qs
a 14 Control-Qr
a 15 Control-Qc
a 16 Control-Qd

The effect of this is to reprogram the cursor keys for Wordstar. Used unshifted, the keys will move the cursor one character in the relevant direction. Shifted, they move it one word left or right, or one screen up and down. Used with the control key, they take you to the right or left end of the line, or top and bottom of the document. Much easier than having to use piles of Control-S's and the like.

Our top ten progs

Just for a change, we thought we'd print a chart for users of serious software. Next month it'll feature the programs you've voted for (see Hot Stuff pages) but this time, just to get things going, we thought we'd let you know the programs we like the best. To avoid silly arguments we're printing the programs simply in alphabetical order.

LIGHT PEN
Electric Studio, £19.95 cass including light pen
Although this package includes a piece of hardware, it justifies its presence in this chart on the basis of the software included with it. It's really very good – read our review in this issue.

MASTERCALC
Campbell Software Design/ Amsoft, £24.95 cass, £29.95 disk
The best spread-sheet program available – knocks spots off Amsoft's Microspread. Can handle spread-sheets of 3000 cells and is fast and easy to use.

MASTERFILE
Campbell Software Design/ Amsoft, £24.95 cass, £29.95
Is probably the best database program available on the Amstrad. Allows you to set up very large files, and sort through them quickly and flexibly.

MAXAM
Arnor, £49.95 cartridge, £26.95 disk, £19.95 tape
An excellent assembler. The cartridge version doesn't use any of the computer's memory and all versions are packed with all the features most users need.

MINIOFFICE
Database, £5.95 cass, £9.95 disk
This package offers remarkable value for money – word-processor, database and spreadsheet all included. What's even more surprising is that the programs, although simple, have been very well thought out.

SCREEN DESIGNER
Amsoft, £14.95 cass, £19.95 disk
A pretty good graphics package, allowing you to create and save colourful screen displays very easily.

SYSTEM X
Pride Utilities, £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk
Combines very reasonable price with considerable power, adding 32 Basic commands to your machine. These include graphics facilities, and the ability to protect your programs.

TASWORD
Tasman Software, £19.95 cass, £24.95 disk
Despite certain flaws, a very good value word-processor. Reviewed elsewhere in these pages.

TRANSMAT
Pride Utilities, £7.95 cass, £11.95 disk
Another good value utility which allows disk owners to transfer their cassette software onto disk. Saves hours of screen-watching.

WORDSTAR
Micropro/Cumana, £119.95 disk
Our review says it all, a classic, fully-professional program for people with lots of money to spend.

SAVE ON SOFTWARE!

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► **Economic**

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So you've read all the reviews, and you're just DYING to get your hands on some of that software, right? Grieve not, dear friend. To coin a phrase, we have the power to help you.

You can buy ANY of the range of Amstrad games reviewed in this issue simply by popping off an envelope to our Aladdin's Cave mail order warehouse. What's more, by collecting our special vouchers – the first one's printed on this page – you can save yourself sums of money ranging from not-to-be-sneezed-at 50p's to gosh-wow-absolutely-unbelievable pounds and pounds.

Basically, each voucher entitles you to a 5% discount off your total order – and depending on how many games you buy, that itself could be quite a saving. But you can also collect the vouchers from different issues to increase the discount you're entitled to. Two vouchers equals 10%, three is 15%, and four will give you the maximum 20% discount. That means you can save a full £2 on a single full-priced piece of software. Not bad going, eh? The savers table shows exactly what savings you're entitled to, and as you can see it contains some pretty big numbers. What's more you DON'T have to add anything for post, packing or VAT. It's all included.

So all you have to do is fill out the order form, and send it to the address below together with your cheque or postal order and any vouchers for which you are claiming a discount. Then just sit back and wait for that parcel...

How to use this table

The table allows you to calculate what discount you are entitled to if you enclose vouchers with your order. All you have to do is round up to the nearest pound the total (pre-discount) cost of the software you're buying. Find this figure on the top row of the table and then read down to see what discount you can claim for one, two, three and four vouchers.

EXAMPLE: Suppose you have ordered two games costing £8.95 each. The total pre-discount cost is £17.90. This rounds up to £18. This month you could only send in a single voucher, so reading down from the £18 figure in the top row you will see that you are entitled to a 90p discount. That'll just about buy you next month's slice of Amstrad Action.

Savings table

Total cost of software pre-discount:	£2.00	£3.00	£4.00	£5.00	£6.00	£7.00	£8.00	£9.00	£10.00	£11.00	£12.00	£13.00	£14.00	£15.00	£16.00	£17.00	£18.00	£19.00	£20.00
One voucher	£0.10	£0.15	£0.20	£0.25	£0.30	£0.35	£0.40	£0.45	£0.50	£0.55	£0.60	£0.65	£0.70	£0.75	£0.80	£0.85	£0.90	£0.95	£1.00
Two vouchers	£0.20	£0.30	£0.40	£0.50	£0.60	£0.70	£0.80	£0.90	£1.00	£1.10	£1.20	£1.30	£1.40	£1.50	£1.60	£1.70	£1.80	£1.90	£2.00
Three vouchers	£0.30	£0.45	£0.60	£0.75	£0.90	£1.05	£1.20	£1.35	£1.50	£1.65	£1.80	£1.95	£2.10	£2.25	£2.40	£2.55	£2.70	£2.85	£3.00
Four vouchers	£0.40	£0.60	£0.80	£1.00	£1.20	£1.40	£1.60	£1.80	£2.00	£2.20	£2.40	£2.60	£2.80	£3.00	£3.20	£3.40	£3.60	£3.80	£4.00

IMPORTANT

► If you send in more than one voucher they must be from DIFFERENT issues of the magazine – in other words the maximum discount this month is 5%. ► The games reviewed in this issue include details of price and disk-version availability. Although we've tried to ensure these details are accurate, we can't be held liable for any errors which have crept in. ► If you want the disk version of a game, you must mark this clearly on the order form – otherwise you'll get a cassette. Do check first that a disk version exists, and ensure you have the right price for it.

Post your completed order to: **Amstrad Action Mail Order, Units 10/11, Imperial Studios, Imperial Road, London SW6. Telephone: 01-731-4607**

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FOR THE AMSTRAD NOW PRESENT -

UTOPIA £29.95

BASIC UTILITIES ROM

(Prod Code EU)

40K USER RAM

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ALL INCL PRICE £29.95

AND GREAT NEWS FOR MACHINE-CODE ENTHUSIASTS:

MAXAM

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PRESS COMMENT

"Innovative device this article finished on the ARNOR editor...... well worth the money!" - **AMSTRAD COMPUTER USER**

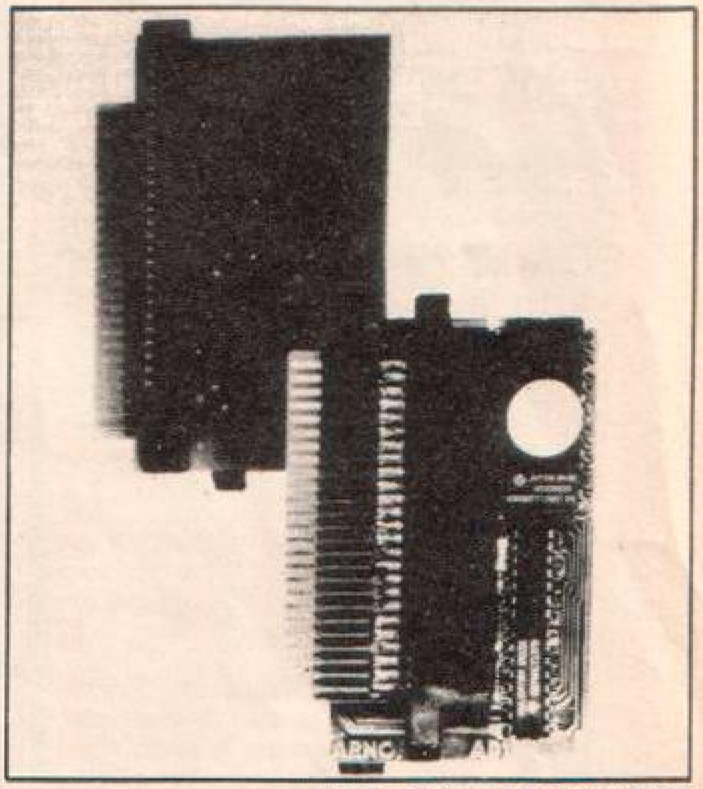
"Assemblers......look no further ARNOR is the best I have seen" - **COMPUTING W.T. AMSTRAD**

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"Quite Special......................difficult to match" - **COMPUTING TODAY**

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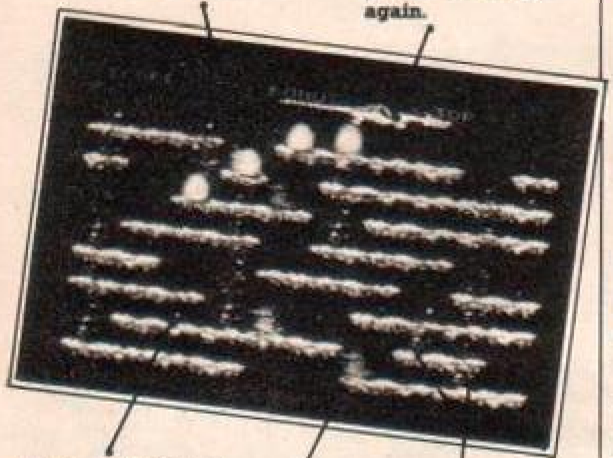
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The platforms are picturesque slabs of rock – or possibly wisps of clouds – connected by flowery vines and creepers. You control a man who can run along the platforms and climb up and down the creepers. A white dragon flies left to right across the screen and every now and then...er...lays an egg. These bounce down a platform or two squashing you, dragons or other eggs in their path.

Once an egg has come to rest you can send it down through the rest of the platforms and off the bottom of the screen by pushing them with the man. You can run off any platform and drop any distance, as long as you don't drop off the bottom of the screen.

There are five different-coloured dragons, each with different movement patterns. Green dragons just shuttle left and right on a particular platform while blue ones will follow a fixed path on creepers as well. Yellow dragons are much nastier and will behave as green ones until you are close enough, when they will start flying after you. Red dragons are the meanest and will fly, walk and climb from anywhere on screen to try to attack you from above.

Red dragons evolve from purple ones, which are created by picking up all the red and green gems on a screen. If you can crush purple dragons before they turn red you can light up the letters of the words Bonus, Extra and Super for more points.

The process of laying eggs and crushing things isn't the most tasteful I've ever seen, while control of the character is finicky when you're trying to climb creepers. The screens are very nicely designed but the dragons become indistinguishable blobs when they're walking around. Some screens have to be done in a certain order, platform game style, or you'll have to commit suicide and start again. Others are more a matter of reflex action and trying to outwit the dragons.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ 20 difficult screens.
- ▶ Attractive screen designs.
- ▶ Novel game task.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Frustrating control.
- ▶ Simple gameplay.
- ▶ Blob-like dragons.
- ▶ Situations where death is the only way out.

GRAPHICS	60%
SONICS	61%
GRAB FACTOR	51%
STAYING POWER	62%
A A RATING	57%

BRAXX BLUFF

Amsoft/Micromega, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Your mission: to rescue three crewmen stranded at the Bluff and return them to your base ship. To do this you have to get through six game sections requiring various skills.

You start in orbit around the planet. During some nice screen displays you automatically disengage your landing craft and take it down to the surface. Here you skim over a block graphic cityscape with an instrument landing system in the middle of the display. This is just a circle in which you have to keep a dot centred until your score has reached at least eight.

If you pass that score you will make a landing and have to fire your retro's in order to stop. You now appear as a little man at the bottom of the screen with a landscape of lines of boulders ahead of you. You have to make your way through the rocks, moving left or right when one blocks your path. This is made harder by having to stop every now and then to shoot down 'krittas' that would otherwise swoop and kill you. All the while you are homing in on the audible beacon on the vehicle containing the three men. This gets higher or lower, as does your score, until you find the 'rover' at score 20.

SECOND OPINION

There was a very old-fashioned feel to this game. Although it's far from easy it didn't really grab me. The graphics are reminiscent of what happens when other micros crash and the sound is terrible.

PC

Now the action switches to driving through three land stages and a sea stage in the rover. The land stages are across marsh, city and desert where you're given a view through the front of the rover of the road ahead. This curves so that you're continually in danger of running off the road and crashing, and there are no second chances.

There are six rover speeds and you need to get to the end of each stage quickly or the three crewmen may die. Your task is complicated by the creatures trying to drain the rovers energy. They appear over the horizon and you have to spend precious steering seconds shooting them down with a cursor before they attach to your roof.

In the marsh you only get one creature at a time but one more is added for each of the next two sections making it harder and harder to concentrate on driving. If 30 of the creatures attach to your craft or you run off the road then that's it – but a succesful journey will get you to the sea.

This is similar to the land stages but moves much faster. There is no longer a road to follow but you have to guide the rover between rocks while homing in on the sound beacon of the base ship. You can't control the rover's speed anymore but there are no more creatures to threaten you.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Six testing stages.
- ▶ Great pressure in switching between steering and shooting.
- ▶ Reasonable 3D graphics – certainly distinctive.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ The first stage is simple and graphically uninteresting.
- ▶ Frustrating to work hard at each stage and then die by a little slip.
- ▶ Graphics are curiously undetailed.
- ▶ Footstep and beacon noises are guaranteed to irritate.



As you trundle the rover across the marsh a creature tries to drain your energy banks.

FINDERS KEEPERS

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, joystick with keys or keys

The Mastertronic miracle continues with a great little arcade adventure containing 25 screens, two large scrolling mazes, a host of objects and some puzzling tasks. You play a little magic knight whose role in all this is to either please a princess with a birthday gift or make an awful lot of readies, depending on how chivalrous he's feeling.

The action takes place in the Castle of Spriteland where lots of odd-looking sprites wander around trying to sap your magical strength. The display shows either a platform screen or part of a maze, along with info on your cash, value of objects carried, strength and number of lives. You can walk around both screens and maze and operate a rather difficult jump control on the platform screens.

Dotted around the whole playing area are little white triangles that signify objects. You can carry five objects at a time which are obtained and used with single key commands for get, trade, drop and examine. Each object has a cash value and can be converted into the real thing at a trader's, where you can also buy things. Two objects sometimes combine to make a third which, along with the trading, will allow you to either make plenty of cash or actually find the birthday present.

There are lots of horrible creatures shaped like squid, hamburgers and eels that will drain your strength on contact. The problem with this is that when you lose a life no visible sign is given and it is all too easy to get very close to ultimate death without realising it.



GRAPHICS	50%
SONICS	22%
GRAB FACTOR	52%
STAYING POWER	51%
A A RATING	55%

RED ARROWS

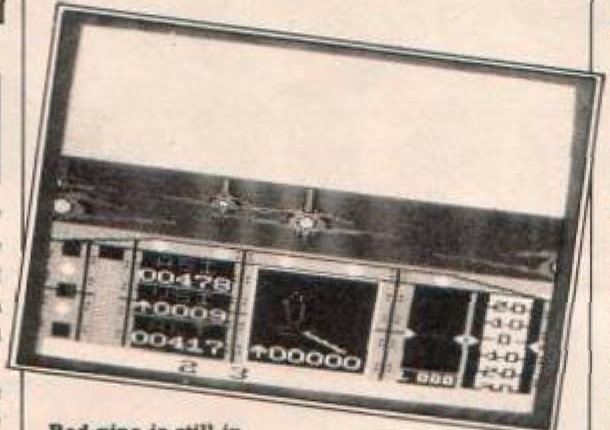
Database Software, £8.95 cass, £12.95 disk, joystick with key or keys

A flight simulator that lets you fly in a display with the Red Arrows is a very attractive prospect. The only problem with this is that you spend most of your time NOT flying in a formation but zooming around on your own wondering where everyone else has got to.

The idea is to gradually improve inprove your flying skills through solo flights, practice moves and finally to perform a display. The display and controls are like those of other flight simulators, with a cockpit-view from the plane and readouts of thrust, speed, height, radar (formation and manoeuvre), artificial horizon, roll indicator, brakes, flaps and undercarriage. Joystick or keys can be used to control thrust, brakes and movement.

Each section can be flown with you trying to stay in formation. At the end of it you are given a score and debriefing time depending on how well you've flown. Most of the time you're just trying to follow the planes in front but this is easier said than done – it's easy to crash, leaving a parachute to drop down in front of your view with you dangling from it.

You are given help in the form of flight tuition which tells you what move you have to make. Even better are the auto-steer and auto-thrust options which can't be used together but allow you to concentrate on steering or thrust in order to stay in formation while the computer takes care of the rest. With the help of these you may be able to maintain formation for longer. But due to the oversteer and non-centering of controls it is ridiculously difficult.



Red nine is still in formation – but that's because the game's in demo.

The graphics aren't that good with the only spots of interest being the other planes. Sound is just engine noise and the occasional crash as you bite the dust again. It will take an incredibly long time to perfect this game and most people won't be bothered.

G O O D N E W S

- **Takes a very long time to perfect.**
- **Interest in trying to emulate the Red Arrows.**

B A D N E W S

- **Control is insensitive.**
- **Graphics and sound are unimpressive.**
- **Very discouraging when you go out of formation so fast.**

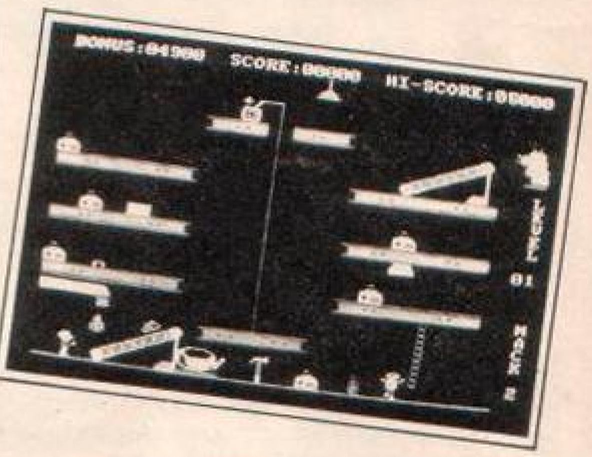
GRAPHICS	52%
SONICS	30%
GRAB FACTOR	48%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	55%

HARD HAT MACK

Ariolasoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Mack is involved in a very hairy piece of construction work high among the girders of an unfinished building. You have to complete the building work on three progressively harder screens. The first screen is made up of five levels of girders, four of which have a chunk missing out of them. Lying about are blocks which you have to pick up and drop into the gaps. Once in place you have to catch a rivet gun that bounces around the site and rivet the blocks into position. A springboard at the right of the screen, a lift at the left and chains help you get between girders but there are dangers that may knock you off.

If you complete three screens you go through them again with additional hazards. Each screen has a bonus time that ticks down and if this runs out you lose a life or get it as points if you finish the screen in time.



SECOND OPINION

It's certainly good value – look no further for a bargain-basement arcade adventure – although the character you control has no real individuality and there's little originality in the game. But graphics and sound are pretty good. At the price there's nothing to rival it.

PC

This room leads out on the right hand side to a slimey maze.



Getting between screens and platforms can be difficult since to jump you have to use diagonals along with accurate positioning of the knight. This can lead to lots of frustrated attempts as you bang against ceilings or fall short with a jump against a wall. This is compounded by the fact that you may well attacked while all this is going on.

A catchy little tune plays throughout the game and the sprites are pretty good until they start overlapping. For £1.99 you're getting a whole lot of game.

BW

G O O D N E W S

- Large playing area.
- Some puzzling object combinations.
- Catchy little tune.
- Good graphics.
- Take a long while to crack.

B A D N E W S

- Bad jumping control.
- Overlapping graphics flicker.

GRAPHICS	69%
SONICS	74%
GRAB FACTOR	67%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	77%

SECOND OPINION

The game's very attractive to look at – it seems dead easy, but it isn't quite. Unfortunately, it really shows its age (1983) with only three screens, and the gameplay won't test veterans of more recent programs. **PC**

G O O D N E W S

- **Clever ideas for screens and animation.**
- **Calls for good timing and reflexes.**
- **The screens are very tough.**

B A D N E W S

- **There are only three screens.**
- **Some of the jump timing is too finicky for comfort.**
- **There's no music – just sound effects.**

GRAPHICS	65%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	60%
A A RATING	66%

COMPETITION

BOULDERDASH
The Grab Factor

The Very Hard Questions

1. When there are no butterflies on screen, how do you turn an amoeba into diamonds?
a Crush it with boulders.
b Surround it with boulders.
c Light the blue touch-paper and retire.

2. On a screen with only walls and boulders, how do you make diamonds?
a Drop the boulders through a magic wall.
b Knock a hole in the wall.
c Rob a jewellers.

3. At a crossroads, do fireflies
a Turn left.
b Turn right.
c Wait for the lollipop-man.

Are we stark, staring BONKERS? Are we out of our TINY LITTLE MINDS? We must be. Because, instead of keeping them for ourselves, we're giving away 50 copies of Mirrorsoft's *Boulderdash* – one of the most addictive substances known to man.

Just dig this competition. At very little cost to your brain – you'll need it to get through the rest of the mag – you could win yourself a copy of the great *Boulderdash* the game that's had me playing overtime for a good few days and nights. If you win you'll find yourself spending many a session dodging rocks and collecting jewels. If you don't win, it's hard cheese.

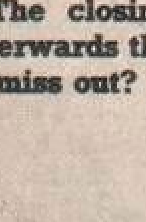
You're going to need all your energy and concentration to actually liberate Rockford from his underground imprisonment, so we've made the competition easy. Even I could answer the questions.

All you have to do is read our review. Then read it again and look at the questions printed below. Then read the review once more. Now you should be ready for some answers. Just choose the correct alternative for each of the three puzzlers and write down the number of the question with the right letter eg 1. d. All the information you need is in the review, so we're not going to listen to any excuses.

Entries must be on a postcard or the back of a letter and include your name and address. Send them to:*Boulderdash Competition, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS*

The closing date for entries to reach us is October 14th. Soon afterwards the fortunate fifty will be digging for victory. Can you afford to miss out?

Blurb Writer



Battle of the Light Pens



The latest plug-in that companies are saying you've just got to buy is the light pen and graphics package. Amstrad, DK'Tronics and the Electric Studio have all just released their products with many different functions and applications. Here's what you can actually do with these wonders of technology.

*** Construct complex designs using mathematical shapes.**

*** Design screens for incorporation in programs.**

*** Use pens themselves in programs.**

*** Draw lots of pretty pictures.**

*** Dump pictures and designs to printer.**

*** Use icon-driven software – if anyone produces it.**

Not what you would call a stunningly impressive list. But remember – they are terrific fun to play around with. They also provide the same functions as most art programs but have the added attraction of the pen to control everything with.

If you're still in doubt about whether you want one, read on and find out what each of the three can do.

Amstrad LP-1 Light Pen
Amstrad, £19.95

This is the official offering and comes with a graphics program on tape and a pen that plugs into the joystick port. The first drawback is that it can only be used with a colour monitor while the other two will work on green screen as well. Once you've loaded the cassette (you can save this to disc if you have a drive) you can flick through some on-screen instructions using the pen to 'turn' the page.

The instructions tell you about the package and how to use sections of the Basic program to incorporate the pen in your own programs. If you're not into programming then you can go straight to the *Nim* game – pick up the last object on a series of piles – or go to the drawing section in mode 0 (16 colours) or mode 1 (4 colours).

All three pens have a number of standard drawing functions including boxes, circles, drawing or brushwork, area filling, point to point line drawing, text entry, screen area copying, area magnifying, screen dumps to printer, zooming on a screen section and save-load screen options. Amstrad's starts with a black screen which can be altered to any other. Unlike the other pens it will work on dark colour screens.

Plotting most functions involves the use of several points. When these appear on screen it's after an annoying thick, white bar has shot out from the left of the screen to the screen position. There is no cursor prior to this so for accuracy you have to adjust the dots that are plotted after they appear.

The features are explained step by step in the instructions. The best of them are the banding and rays functions. Banding allows you to connect a series of points while rays can be extended from a single point to give a spoked or starburst effect.

Programming is a little difficult since you actually have to break into the Basic listing and pull out some sub-routines for use in your own listings. To use it to its fullest will take programming knowledge and experimentation, since otherwise it merely lets you pick between a number of cursors with the pen.

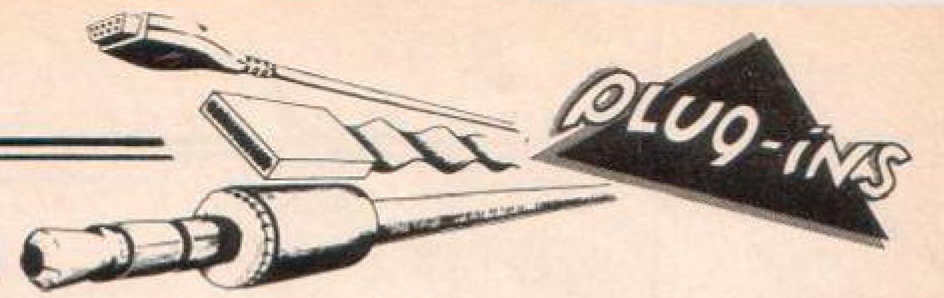
You can only use an Amstrad DMP-1 printer for dumps but you can adjust the size and shape of the printout to change its appearance.

GOOD NEWS

- Step by step instructions and good menus make it very easy to use.
- Possible to incorporate pen in your own programs.
- The *Nim* game is tough to beat.
- The colours and functions can produce reasonable pictures.

BAD NEWS

- Only uses the Amstrad printer.
- Not easy to use subroutines in your own programs.
- Point-plotting using band from edge of screen is annoying.



DK'Tronics Graphics Light Pen
DK'Tronics, £24.95

This pen is impressively packaged and comes with an interface that plugs into the disk port, allowing a disk drive or other add-on to plug into the back of it. The pen itself then plugs into a socket on the interface. The software once again comes on cassette but this can also be saved to disk, as can any screen designs.

The program is run by a series of icon-driven menus where you select an icon with the pen and then press space bar to trigger the action.

The first menu allows you to save or load screens from disk or tape while number two has a handy calibrating routine. This allows you to try to centre a screen cursor beneath the tip of the pen, using the cursor keys, for more accurate drawing. This menu also contains the clear screen option which either mercifully gets rid of a load of junk or infuriatingly destroys a great work of unsaved art.

Menu three has the draw, fill and set colour options as well as a nice set pencil one. Here you can determine the width of the brush you are using on screen or switch to the grafitti-like spray can mode. When you return to draw mode you can now use the width of pen set or get a great spattering effect with the spray can.

Menu four has another nice trick with the rubber band feature. This allows you to connect lines around a number of 'pins' and then fill them in permanently in your chosen width and colour.

The fifth menu can access three others for copying, adding text and using the scratch pad. The copying can be straightforward 1:1 or images can be blown up and shrunk by up to four times, screen size permitting.

The final function is the scratch pad, which is excellent for doing detailed editing of sections of the screen and for reproducing small images over and over. Areas can be taken from the screen, edited and put back or a fresh piece of pad can be overlayed on the screen. This allows you to be pixel accurate since the area on the pad is blown up many times from the screen.

To get printouts you have to load in a small programme and then type in a listing from the instruction booklet. Listings are provided to get Amstrad and Epson printer dumps but the information is provided to convert them for other printers. There are also machine code and basic listings which allow you to save screen designs and use them in your own programmes.

These options are much more flexible than the Amstrad LP-1 and this makes it the best package for incorporating a light pen in your own programs.

G O O D N E W S

* Good presentation using icon menus.
* The best package for programming.
* A lovely spray can effect.
* Reasonable selection of features allowing good screen pictures.

B A D N E W S

* The most expensive of the three pens.
* The menus may be pretty but they get annoying to flick through.
* The instruction manual could be better designed.

The Electric Studio Light Pen
The Electric Studio, £19.95 cass

Graphically, this is the most impressive of the packages. It has a host of functions, but it's also the least applicable to programming. It can be used with colour or green screen monitors and loads the appropriate package when prompted. The pen comes already attached to a small plug-in interface but there is no way to plug any other device into the disk drive port.

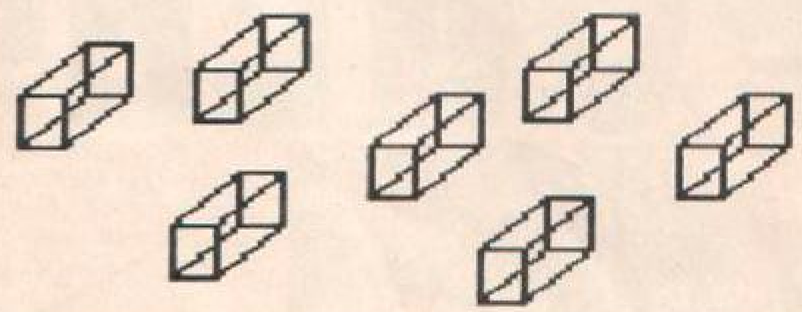
The screen appears with one large menu overlaid on the right hand side. If, for some reason, you prefer the left, you can switch sides using the 'M' icon on the menu. When you're actually using a function this disappears, revealing the rest of the screen underneath, and reappears when you press the enter key.

Each of the functions appears as a little box in the menu and is activated by the space bar or joystick fire button. The joystick can also be used instead of the cursor keys for pixel-accurate cursor positioning.

The brush function has variable widths like the DK'Tronics pen, but its spray can doesn't meet the same standard since it doesn't produce the same grafitti-like spattered effect. Copy, zoom, words, paint-fill and rays work much the same as for the other pens.

The special functions start with the geometric shape drawing which allows you to create lots of patterns very easily. Boxes can be done both as normal rectangles, as filled-in boxes or even as 3D cubes. The cubes don't have to be regular, though, and you can concoct some very interesting 3D images.

It's not only 3D cubes that you can draw but also triangles so that you can draw pyramids as well as the normal triangle.



If you want to use the package to produce graphs there are dotted and grid backgrounds available and any screen display can be dumped to an Amstrad or Epson compatible printer. Colours and textures for displays aren't hard to come by since there are the 16 standard colours and four basic textures, each with nine variations.

Instead of just copying an image you can drag, reverse or flip it to achieve a new image. The drag option lets you pick up an area of screen and put it down somewhere else while reverse and flip let you turn an image upside down or back to front. If symmetry is what you desire then the horizontal and vertical mirror draws will suit you, although to produce a recognisable and accurate image you'll need to use the cursor keys or joystick.

The colour mask is another helpful feature in that it will convert one colour on-screen into another and is handy for altering any mistakes made while paint filling. Fleck colour display and file display are scrolling menus at the top of the screen. They allow you to pick from a series of shapes and colours which can be dotted around in character squares.

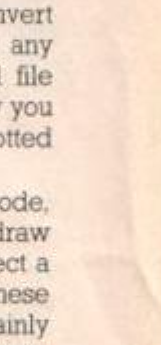
If you tire of all this you can just use good old pen and erase mode, where you can draw lines and rub them out. Even the line-draw mode is quite fancy, with options to draw simple lines or connect a series of dots to form a 3D image or a geometric plane. All these functions add up to a powerful graphics package which is certainly enjoyable to use, but won't be of much help if you want to do your own light pen programming.

G O O D N E W S

* **Lots of different geometric shapes built in.**
* **Easy-to-use, one-screen, menu.**
* **More possibilites for textures, symbols and designs.**
* **Good graphics handling with drag, mirror, copy, fill, mask and zoom options.**
* **Well-designed, helpful instruction booklet.**

B A D N E W S

* **No potential for own programming.**
* **You can't use a disk drive at the same time.**
* **The flashing cursor can be irritating.**



CONCLUSION

All three pens are good graphics packages, but The Electric Studio's is the best because of its extra features.

THE AMSOFT POWER-SELL

Tough, powerful, aggressive. That's the reputation Amsoft has earned among software houses in the last year during its continual drive to seek out and market the best Amstrad programs it can get its hands on. Amstrad Action's CHRIS ANDERSON caught the slow-train to Brentwood to speak to the men at the heart of the operation, software development manager PETER ROBACK and software sales manager MIKE MORDECAI.

ANDERSON: Maybe you could start by explaining how Amsoft fits into the overall Amstrad umbrella.



▶ Mike Mordecai

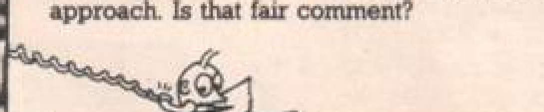
MORDECAI: Amsoft is the division of the company which was set up to support the hardware side.

ROBACK: It's also there as a business in its own right – in other words it's not there as a loss-making or break-even company. It's there to make profits as is every division in Amstrad.

It's not just window-dressing to help support the machines?

ROBACK: It's not window-dressing and it is not pure support, it is a healthy division of the company in its own right.

I've heard it suggested that Amsoft in its relationship with other software houses has a very hard-headed, tough, aggressive approach. Is that fair comment?



ROBACK: We just take the attitude as I said before, Amsoft is not there purely to support the computer, it has to be profit-making in its own right. It has to be business-like in the way it conducts itself and therefore without wishing to discredit any software houses, we may be taking a much more business-like attitude toward them than maybe they're used to seeing. So in other words I regard a piece of software not for its prestige value in being seen on our machine, and a good example of that would be a product like *Elite*. There is no way I could go out and spend 50, 75 thousand pounds on a product like *Elite* just because it's prestigious to have a title like that on our machine. It's got to be profit making. That is the extent to which we are hard-headed toward software companies. We won't buy programs off them if they aren't going to make us money.

Are you saying there's a difference between being business-like and being over-aggressive?

ROBACK: Yes. Unfortunately there are people who don't understand that.

So how good are your relations with most software houses?



▶ Peter Roback

ROBACK: The software houses that we deal with – and at the moment there's probably over a hundred of them – we have the utmost respect for them and I'm sure if you speak to any of them you'll find they've got the utmost respect for us. They make money out of us and we make money out of them. Nobody's ashamed of making profits. We had complaints from a lot of software houses in the early days that all we were interested in is wiping third party software houses out and basically taking the whole of the market for ourselves. But that isn't what we're about, it really isn't. Sure we want the best software, because as I've said, we've got to be profitable. But we have another side to us which says that we want to make sure that the best software gets seen by the greatest number of Amstrad users. And we feel – I'm sure not many people would argue with it –that Amsoft as a vehicle is the way to get your software seen by the greatest number of Amstrad users.

How big a part of Amstrad is the computer division?

MORDECAI: It's got to be a very important part.

ROBACK: Computers are a product to which Amstrad is 100 per cent committed, but there again we've got other products we're 100 per cent committed to as well. We also make hi fi, television, videos, portable stereos.

Amstrad hi fi is said to have a reputation for low reliability, whereas the computers have proved to be extremely reliable. Is there any explanation for that?

MORDECAI: You're relating our computers to Commodore and Spectrum, for which the unreliability factor is astronomical. The hi fi market is a different kettle of fish.

What about the people who actually buy the machines? When the 464 first came out, much was made of the fact that this was a new breed of computer aimed at a wider consumer market. Do you have in your minds a different picture of an Amstrad owner compared to say Spectrum or 64 owners?

ROBACK: It's not in our minds, we've got factual evidence of who our owners are and they cover a very wide section of people. Very wide. For instance working in the hi fi and TV markets we were aiming fairly down-market – class code C2's, D's, E's. Now we're aiming completely across the spectrum.

Do you think that's different from other computers being sold?

ROBACK: Yes I do, because the Amstrad computer is just as attractive to little Johnny aged 12 as it is to Alan Sugar (*Amstrad's managing director*) to sit there and type his private memos into and hold his private files in, or to Joe Bloggs who owns the menswear shop in the high street, or you could walk round this building and discover that most of our secretaries and a lot of our managerial staff actually use a 464 or a 664 at their desk. Whether they use it for memo-writing, for typing letters, for keeping accounts on, whatever they use it for it's a highly versatile package – and it's a nice games machine as well.

You say Alan Sugar uses one?

ROBACK: He's got one in his upstairs office and he also uses one at home.

So are you saying that although you've got the games players as with Commodore and Sinclair, you also have businessmen using Amstrads – that's the main difference?

ROBACK: Definitely.



▶ The 9th floor open-plan office where all Amstrad's top executives, including Alan Sugar, have their desks. All the MD gets is a bigger chair. The offices of the Amstrad Computer User magazine are four floors below.

Looking at software sales, how do business programs sell compared to games software?

MORDECAI: Well during the known leaner months of April and May when software houses are all holding their heads and saying when's the next customer coming in to buy this famous game, we were still selling a terrific amount of business software. That never went down at all, in fact that's on the rise and increasing all the time. Whereas during the April/May syndrome, the games software became stagnated and picked up again during June and July.

But comparing the two with each other, where do you get most of your income from?

MORDECAI: Oh the arcade games certainly outsell the business programs, but business software is on a steady climb.



▶ Peter Roback studying a new program.

How far are things going to shift now toward disk software?

ROBACK: A long way. I think people are sick and tired of waiting quarter of an hour while a tape's loading.

MORDECAI: We are looking at only a 40-60 split in favour of tapes this season.

Is that what's happening at the moment or what you think will happen?

MORDECAI: That's what we're planning for. In-house research shows it's going that way.

ROBACK: We're already down on record as saying that one of our aims is to get people transformed to using disks. It's not because they're more expensive or that we make more money – in fact we make less money out of a disk than we do out of a tape. But what it is, it makes it easier for the end user. It makes the machine that much more user-friendly. There is nothing more antagonistic than sitting watching that computer doing ostensibly nothing for ten minutes while you're waiting to load a piece of software.

So do you think Amstrad is going to become the first home machine to successfully make the switch – to go the American way where the market is dominated by disk-based software?
ROBACK: Yes, definitely.



Is that going to affect the nature of games released on the machine?

ROBACK: Adventures will be bigger, games will be bigger, they'll be more complex, more interesting. It creates a lot more scope for people.

Do you feel in retrospect a mistake was made in going for three inch drives instead of three and a half like everyone else?

ROBACK: No.

Was it done for cost reasons?

MORDECAI: Whatever the reasons were Alan Sugar decided it.

ROBACK: And he very rarely makes mistakes.

MORDECAI: We've had no comeback really on three inch disks. We've got support on them, we've got blank disks, and the price isn't overhyped. It complements our computer perfectly.

But doesn't it complicate things for software houses having to duplicate on yet another format?

ROBACK: Well who is using three and a half inch disks?

Basically everyone using mini disk drives – the Apricot, the new Atari ST, everyone – except Amstrad.

ROBACK: What are the sales figures of Apricots and Atari STs compared to Amstrads? We've already got the widest usage – or much wider than they have. I really think you should be asking them that question – are they regretting going for three and a half? We're setting the standard because we've got the greatest volume out there.

When you look at a new title, how is a decision made on whether to release it? Some people would say that some of the Amsoft range is not very amazing quality. Is that fair comment?

MORDECAI: It's fair comment on some of it, because originally there was nothing written for the Amstrad. We had to take conversions. Now we've got to the stage with something like Virgin's *Sorcery* where it's written on the Amstrad purely for the Amstrad and there is a noticeable difference. There are a lot more games coming through like that and software houses are now taking more care on conversions. But initially we had to have the software to support the machine when we launched it. We didn't want to do an Enterprise, we didn't want to do a BBC, we didn't want to do a Commodore C16, we wanted to do an Amstrad. We wanted total support.

But are you happy to push out a game if you think it will sell quite a few, even if the quality isn't that great?

ROBACK: It goes back to what we said before. We're in this to make money. If it will sell enough to make a profit, we'll sell it.

Even if that might hurt the long-term reputation of Amsoft as a software producer?

ROBACK: No, you see you have to draw a line where Amsoft switched from being a support vehicle to being a software publisher as such. To start with it was a support vehicle –the machine had to be launched with software. Had to be. Now we can concentrate on getting quality games, real quality games. We've had a breathing space where we've had six months to have games written to our specifications. We've now earned the reputation to allow people like US Gold to launch stuff under the Amsoft label. We've earned that reputation. People like Beyond Software wouldn't give us products like *Lords of Midnight* to bring out under the Amsoft label if they didn't think they were getting a very good deal and were doing better by bringing it to Amsoft than by doing it themselves.

MORDECAI: Taking it to the extreme, we've proved what we can do with rubbish. Imagine what we can do with good titles.

ROBACK: Our marketing is very, very...vicious. It's vicious marketing. Nobody can compete with Amstrad's marketing, because that's what we were built on.

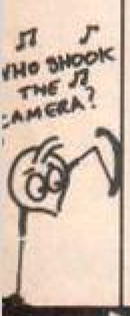
You guys have come in to the computer scene fairly recently – what do you dislike most about it?

MORDECAI: Nothing, it's a very interesting industry. Younger people are involved.

ROBACK: The dislikes that I've got – and they're becoming less and less prominent now – is that there're a lot of people who are in it for the prestige. They're in the trade for the computer's sake and not for the business sake. They care more about the prestige of carrying big titles and are less business orientated. But they're becoming weeded out. The vast majority of people now realise it's a business like any other.



▶ **Peter Roback (left) and Mike Mordecai discussing the virtues of Sorcery**



What they said about us

What are your feelings about the launch of Amstrad Action?

MORDECAI: It's long overdue – where've you been?

ROBACK: Yes, it's very long overdue. You look at the number of books published for the Amstrad – there's over a hundred titles, yet there are only two magazines.

So despite the fact that Amstrad has its own magazine, you see us as an opportunity rather than a threat?

ROBACK: Yes, of course.

The new releases

Mike and Pete's comments on some of the new titles coming out either under the Amsoft label or on the new Amsoft Gold label:

Sorcery Plus
"It's going to be huge. It's the best game yet on the Amstrad. There are almost triple the number of locations in Sorcery."

Lords of Midnight
"It's a classic program."

Willy Wobbler
"I don't see anything wrong with that title. It's a nice title. It's not a conversion, it'll come out simultaneously with the Commodore version."

Cyrus 2 Chess
"It'll blow your brains out. It is brilliant, brilliant. You've got a choice of 2D, or 3D view. There are 12 playing levels. There's one where the computer senses how good you are and plays to your level. It is superb."

3D Grand Prix
"It's lovely. It's by the same boys who wrote 3D Grand Prix on the Beeb, but it's been improved. The graphics are obviously much better. You've got extra features like rear-view mirrors."

3D Stunt Rider
"That was actually designed by Alan Sugar. Obviously it wasn't written by him."

3D Boxing
"Far superior to Elite's version (Frank Bruno's Boxing). Voice synthesis, lovely 3D graphics, good movement."

Glen Hoddle's Soccer
"It's a very nice soccer game."

Other planned Amsoft titles include **Gryphon** and **Black Thunder** from Wizard Development and a large selection of US Gold games.

ESP THE PEN THAT LIKES TO SAY *YES*

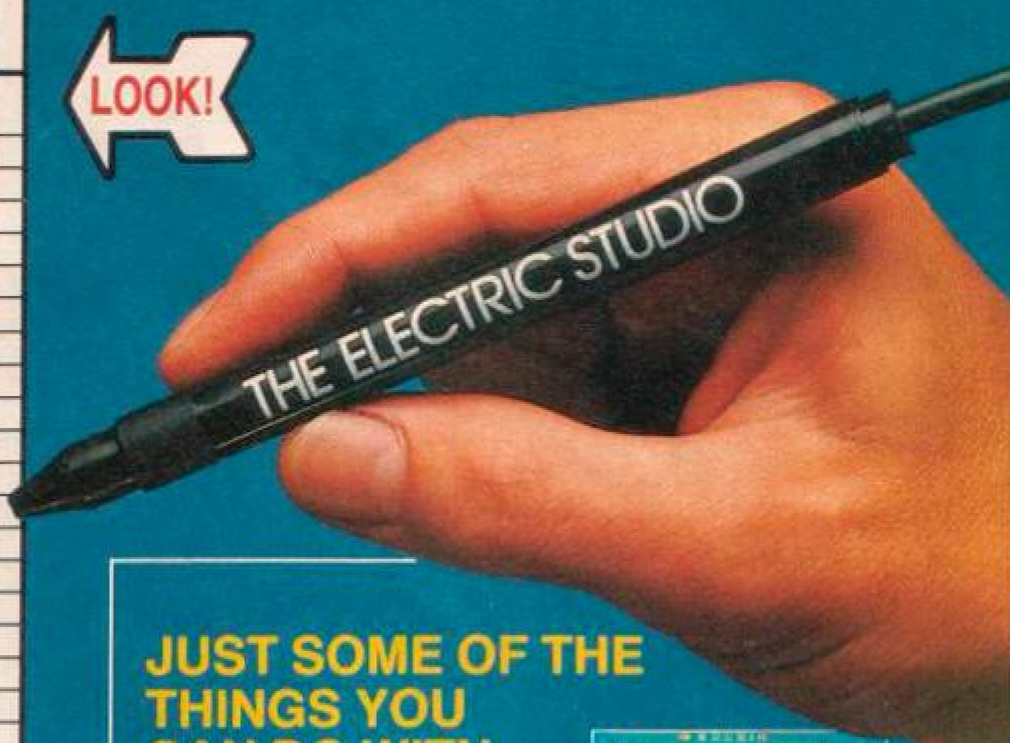
ELECTRIC STUDIO PEN

FEATURES/ FUNCTIONS	ESP	dk'tronics	Any Other
SINGLE COMPLETE ON SCREEN MENU	YES	NO	Please compare any other pen package currently available
DRAG SCREEN OBJECTS	YES	NO	
FLIP SCREEN OBJECTS	YES	NO	
CURSOR REMOVAL	YES	NO	
ELASTIC BOXES	YES	YES	
ELASTIC LINE	YES	YES	
ELASTIC TRIANGLE	YES	NO	
ELASTIC ELLIPSE	YES	NO	
ELASTIC DIAMOND	YES	NO	
ELASTIC POLYGON	YES	NO	
ELASTIC HEXAGON	YES	NO	
ELASTIC OCTAGON	YES	NO	
ELASTIC CUBE	YES	NO	
ELASTIC PYRAMID	YES	NO	
CIRCLES	YES	YES	
SOLID CIRCLES	YES	NO	
SOLID BOXES	YES	NO	
SOLID ELLIPSES	YES	NO	
WEDGES	YES	NO	
BEZIER SIMULATIONS	YES	NO	
ZOOM EDIT	YES	YES	
REVERSE/MIRROR IMAGES	YES	NO	
REFERENCE BACKGROUND	YES	NO	
GRID BACKGROUND	YES	NO	
X,Y DISPLAY OPTION	YES	NO	
PAINT FILL	YES	YES	
COLOUR WASHING	YES	NO	
RESIDENT SCREEN DUMP	YES	NO	
3D EDGE PLOTTING	YES	NO	
TEXT	YES	YES	
9 BRUSH SIZES	YES	NO	
18 SPRAY NOZZLES	YES	NO	
4 BASIC TEXTURES	YES	NO	
TEXTURE VARIATION	YES	NO	
XOR TEXTURE SHADING	YES	NO	
RESIDENT SYMBOL/SHAPE FILE	YES	NO	
RESIDENT FLECK PRINT FILE	YES	NO	
26 PAPER COLOURS	YES	NO	
15 COLOUR/TONE PALETTE	YES	NO	
POINT SETTING	YES	YES	
FIXED POINT RAYS	YES	NO	
MIRROR DRAWING	YES	NO	
HOME FUNCTION	YES	NO	
KEY CONTROL NUDGE	YES	YES	
JOYSTICK NUDGE	YES	NO	
AVAILABLE FOR 464	YES	YES	
AVAILABLE FOR 664	YES	?	
MODE 1 & 2 AVAILABLE	YES	?	

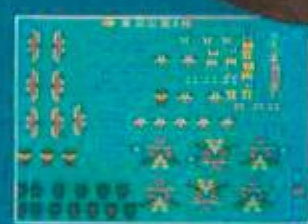
DUE TO LACK OF SPACE, WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LIST THE OTHER 20+ FUNCTIONS OUR PEN IS CAPABLE OF.

WHILST OUR COMPETITORS MOSTLY SAY NO!

LOOK!



JUST SOME OF THE THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH THIS COMPLETE LIGHT PEN PACKAGE



USER DEFINED CHARACTERS



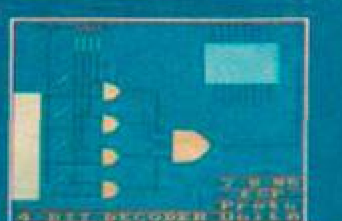


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RIDDLERS DEN

[redacted]

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Electric Dreams

SOFTWARE





The Pilgrim chronicles his travels in the realm of danger and discovery



To: All Amstrad adventurers
From: The Pilgrim
Greetings!

As this is our first encounter, let me welcome you to these pages, where you shall find chronicled the deeds (and misdeeds!) of adventurers across the globe.

Each month, the Pilgrim will abandon the Path, book a room in a friendly Inn, order a bacon and lettuce sandwich, and set down on these pages all the knowledge he has gained in his travels. In particular, you shall hear of:

The latest releases – and the trials and tribulations to be found therein.

The hottest news – from software companies great and small, enabling you to keep one step ahead of all the rapid developments in the world of Adventure.

The liveliest gossip – who got lost in the Goblin's Dungeon, and who got out.

The most helpful hints – to get you out of trouble. And, if you've cracked a game, the chance to have your name counted amongst the Lords of Adventure, providing assistance to others and thereby winning friends across the country..

All this shall you find, and more! In fact, everything you need to conquer worlds old and new. So give that troll a poke in the belly, grab a seat, and read on...

Let's face it. The Pilgrim is pretty chuffed with his decision to buy an Amstrad. If you're a dedicated adventurer looking for an up-to-date 8 bit machine, you really couldn't have chosen a better machine for opening windows into the unknown. The fact is that, unlike other micros, adventure and the Amstrad have been going hand in hand since the very beginning. Some of the very first software for the Arnold was of the adventure variety, with offerings from Level 9 and Interceptor reaching the shelves only weeks after the machine first appeared. The Pilgrim has jotted down elsewhere his pick of the games available so far, and here we take a quick gander at some of the latest releases, one of which – hold on to your seats, because it isn't often that a reserved Puritan like myself makes such statements – looks like becoming an all-time classic...

RED MOON
Level 9, £6.95 cass

OK, let's not beat about the bush. I'm going to put my reputation on the line for this one. Here, fellow pilgrims, we have that rare event – a real classic. I know everyone always babbles on about Level 9 and how fantabulous they are, but believe me, this game is really very near the top of the All-Time Adventure League.

First, you get over two hundred locations PLUS graphics. I'll admit that Level 9's graphics aren't as great as their game design, but in *Red Moon* they're good enough not to detract from the overall sense of excellence. The location descriptions are full and vivid, and the locations themselves well thought-out and original, though the opening scenes do bear some small resemblance ('grassy mounds' and so on) to those of *Return to Eden*, one of the company's earlier releases.

Red Moon takes you back to the days of *Colossal Adventure*, magic, dragons, and fabulous treasure. The game seems to have distilled some of the most attractive qualities of earlier titles and brought them all together – so not only do you get the excitement of exploration and discovery (as you get in most good big adventures) – you also get the thrill of casting spells, finding treasure, and doing battle with mythical beasts. You may think this is a bit old hat, but believe me it is done very well indeed. A lot of games recently have been cast in the science-fiction mould (including Level 9's), and it's nice to be able to indulge in a bit of dragon-bashing again, if only to keep the right arm in fine fettle.



Your quest is for the Red Moon Crystal, source of all magic on the planet where you find yourself. Useful features include commands for turning on and off the graphics, plus the very useful ability to enter commands while the graphics are still being drawn. The pictures, however, draw reasonably quickly so you won't have to wait around too long in any case.

There are one or two small omissions from the instructions. Casting

spells, for example, requires you to have found a particular object for each spell. If you find a pearl, for example, then you will automatically be able to cast a 'SNOOP' spell, which lets you peer into adjoining locations without actually going there – very useful if you think there's nothing but a vast pair of jaws waiting to welcome you round the corner. Also not mentioned in the instructions are 'hit points' – you get a limited number of these and lose one every time you cast a spell.

Re-incarnation is possible – though I'm not sure how many times you can use it (I suspect there is a limit). It dumps you back at the start, together with all your treasures. I find this a useful addition, since it means you don't have to SAVE a game quite so often, a process that can be rather a chore if you're operating a tape-based system. Unfortunately, although the program is 664 compatible, there are no disc versions around yet, though Level 9 say upgrades may be available later.

The only other problem with *Red Moon* – and this is common to all Level 9's games – arises when you enter a word that the program doesn't understand. Instead of telling you which of the words entered has been rejected, the game simply says 'Wirts Mirt Bud?' or 'Eh?' or some other unhelpful response. The vocabulary is large, admittedly, so you won't have this problem too often if you've some adventuring experience, but it would still be nice to see this facility added to what is otherwise an excellent game.

Level 9 have had a consistent reputation for good games, and *Red Moon* is one of their best, if not THE best. At £6.95 that makes it an essential purchase for all followers of the Hidden Path. DROP everything and GO for it!

SUBSUNK

Firebird, £2.50 cass

Firebird have brought out some good budget arcade games, and now they're trying their hand at adventures. Perhaps not surprisingly, in view of the low cost, their first effort is a Quilled adventure, but the Pilgrim has to admit that it's one of the better Quilled efforts he's seen, and includes some quite decent graphics.



Subsunk places you in a nuclear submarine. You're all on your lonesome, the sonar indicates that you're at the bottom of the ocean, and everyone else has been captured by the enemy (the Russians, of course – don't expect any political surprises here). As a resourceful reporter who evaded capture by hiding underneath a bunk, you must raise the submarine unaided.

First the bad points. Like most Quilled games, *Subsunk* doesn't always race through the old RAM to get the nitty gritty on the screen. In fact, there are times when you really have to twiddle your thumbs waiting for the program to do nothing much other than add two and two together and print 'You can't do that, matey', or whatever. However, *Subsunk* is better than most in this respect, and, more importantly, the design of the game readily compensates for its faults.

The locations and, in particular, the puzzles have been very well thought out and are extremely logical, but at the same time they manage to be amusing and original. You'll find yourself bouncing on mattresses, cracking combination safes, and wrestling with vacuum cleaners in an attempt to save your valuable hide. There aren't that many places to go inside a submarine, but there's a lot to find and a lot of thinking to be done.

The Pilgrim felt that some of the puzzles were a bit too obvious, but otherwise he reckons this is very good value for money. The only thing I would point out is that some of the responses are a bit odd. Entering 'Hold breath', for example, gets the reply 'You bash it with all your might! Nothing happened.' I'm still trying to work that one out...

SHADOW OF THE BEAR

Kuma, £3.95 cass

Oh-oh, here we have a real poltroon of a game. I'm sorry, fellow travellers, but all I can say is that this is one adventure that should stay on the shelves. Let's examine the evidence for the prosecution...

First, it's so slow in execution that I reckon it must be in BASIC – if it's in code, it's got to be Morse code or something. I can't believe it's in machine code. It doesn't disable the BREAK key, or those combinations of keys that (if you're unlucky enough to hit them while entering something else) have an annoying feature of generating break codes. This means that you may have to wait for the damn thing to load not once, perhaps not even twice, but in my case three times. It's not worth the effort, I can assure you.

Second, it's poorly designed. You crash your spyplane in Siberia and must make your way to the Chinese Republic. Don't ask me why, since it isn't very clear from the game exactly who you are or why you should choose to undertake such an immense journey, except for the usual assumption that the Russians are the 'enemy'. Perhaps they are, but let's have a little background detail.

The display is poorly designed too. You get a large, slow-drawing, ugly screen with mode 0 text and a rather poor picture. You can then move using the cursor keys, or enter I to switch to a completely different screen that shows you how cold you're getting, how many matches you've got left, and enables you to enter commands. There appear to be under 20 acceptable commands, which isn't enough by today's standards, and you have to make sure you've engaged the CAPS LOCK key to enter any of them. Since there's a feature on the Amstrad to convert all input to upper or lower case, that's just plain lazy. Entering R returns you to the display screen, but frankly I should just press ESC and flee to the kitchen for a cup of coffee. The game costs £3.95, but I should save your money.

NORTH SEA BULLION ADVENTURE

Kuma, £3.95 cass

Just in case you're tempted, Kuma's other offering is no better than *In the Shadow of the Bear*. The Pilgrim marks this game with a big red cross and advises you to avoid it like the plague. 'Nuff said.

SMUGGLER'S COVE

CRL, £5.95 cass

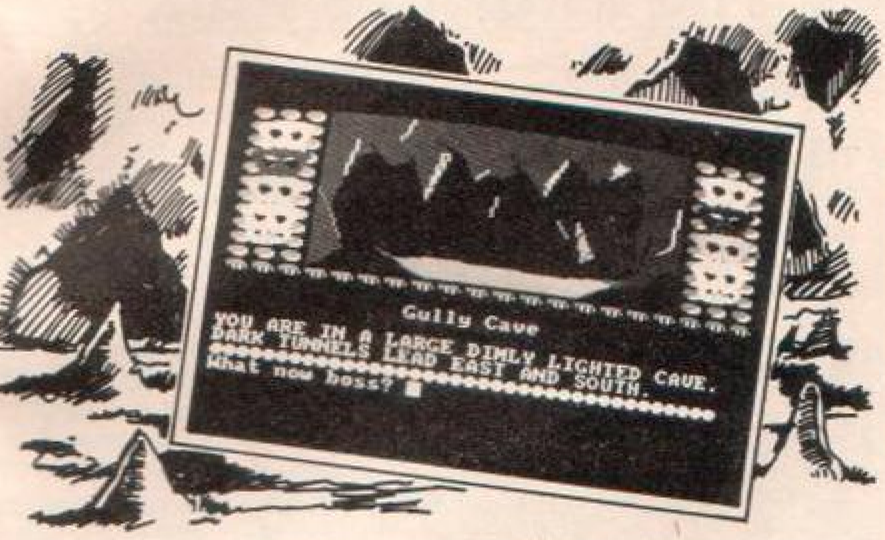
This game has several amusing touches – it occasionally flashes up witty remarks on the screen, has an enjoyable variety of responses to your inputs, and even manages some quite decent pictures. You find yourself trapped in a complex of caves, and must avenge the death of a sailor long dead in order to avoid being cursed and suffering a hideous fate.

The plot idea is in fact quite original and, together with the good humour, this game could have had a lot going for it. But, sadly, it hasn't been carefully enough programmed to make the grade. For a start, the ESC key hasn't been disabled, and since the program is on tape and takes quite a while to load, hitting the wrong key can be very annoying.

Furthermore, some of the responses simply don't make sense and lead to a general sense of frustration. Being asked 'What's that 'e be saying??' may be amusing first time round, but after a while it gets rather tedious. Also, some of the fill routines for the pictures are faulty, resulting in colour escaping from trapped areas and bleeding across the screen.

Nevertheless, the program does accept some quite complex inputs, and there are some suitably gory touches. At one point, if





you're not quick enough to escape, Blackbeard's Ghost crawls out of a chasm to give you a hard time, and the descriptions are really pretty gruesome. But overall, *Smuggler's Cove* can be recommended only to those with patience, a greed for gold, and a forgiving attitude to sloppy programming.

Land a copy of *Red Moon*

Red Moon looks set to become one of the best-selling adventures on the Amstrad. Now you could strike lucky and walk off with a free copy! Level 9 have kindly slipped 10 free tapes into the Pilgrim's back-pack, and he's going to send them off to the ten readers who write in with the most ingenious clues for publication in the magazine. So, if you've solved a puzzle in an adventure game running on the Amstrad and are feeling ridiculously pleased with yourself, why not go one step further and win yourself a free game? All you need to do is think up a riddle or other form of cryptic clue that gives the solution to the puzzle in a cleverly concealed (but soluble) fashion and send it on a postcard to: **The Pilgrim, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS**

	Atmosphere	Interaction	Challenge	AA-Rating
Red Moon	90%	70%	85%	90%
Sub Sunk	65%	50%	60%	65%
Shadow of the Bear	40%	10%	20%	25%
North Sea Bullion	45%	10%	20%	25%
Smuggler's Cove	68%	55%	50%	62%



Clue-Sniffing with The Pilgrim

Here it is! The first instalment of the most comprehensive Amstrad adventure tips column available! Stuck, struggling, or just plain lazy, if you collect these tips every month you'll soon build up an invaluable library of hints to keep you out of trouble. What's more, if you can write in offering help and hints on a game you've solved, you could find yourself nominated as one of the Lords of Adventure! Fame and fortune could be yours, so don't delay - write in now!

LORDS OF TIME
Eating mushrooms could improve your finances.
Can't get the keys? Try giving someone something to reflect on.

HEROES OF KARN
Frogs?? Don't you just love 'em!
Pirates?? Don't you just hate them! But if you could find someone small..

SNOWBALL
The Waldroid can't see through spray

COLOSSAL ADVENTURE
Nugget can't go upstairs, but can go down plugh

GREMLINS
Being followed? Get rid of Gremlins in a flash!

The Pilgrim's Post

You don't have to sit in your attic all alone, doing battle with the denizens of darkness. Adventurers all over the country are waiting to hear from you – and this is the place to get in touch with them. News, views, hints, tips, and gossip – all is welcome, and although I may not have time to answer your letters individually I can assure you that they'll all be read, and many will find their way onto these pages. If you've solved a game – or games – and would like to share your expertise with others, then grab a pen and drop me a line. Each month, the Pilgrim will be drawing up a list of the latest Lords of Adventure – readers who have persevered in the struggle against all manner of obstacles and are now prepared to render assistance to others. Adventurers tend to be a modest lot, but let's hear you blowing your own trumpets for a change!

I can honestly say – I swear on my pilgrim's staff – that these pages are YOUR pages. Your experiences in the world of adventure will go to make this section into a realm of mystery and imagination for other readers. And if you have any comments about the column itself, then of course feel free to let me know – your suggestions will not go unheeded.

Send parchments, scrolls, rune-carved stones etc. to: **The Pilgrim, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS.**



The Pilgrim's Pick

The Pilgrim chooses the eight programs in his personal, all-time Top Ten. But, then, he never could count. So if those £1 coins are wearing a hole in your breeches, you can't go wrong by splashing out on one (or all, if you're fabulously wealthy) of the following:

COLOSSAL ADVENTURE: The great mega-classic that started the whole schmoozle and is still played avidly by adventurers all over the world. Originally a 170K mainframe Fortran blockbuster, it's been simultaneously expanded (in design) and compressed (in code) to run on your Arnold by at least three software companies – Level 9 (*Colossal Adventure*), Melbourne House (*Classic Adventure*), and Duckworth (*Colossal Cave*). Go for Level 9's game if you can afford it – it's still the best and lengthiest version of this text-only classic available for a micro.

THE HOBBIT: Looking a bit aged by now, but still hot on atmosphere and notable for being one of the first games to introduce 'interactive characters'. If you haven't escaped from the Goblin's Dungeon, you haven't lived. Melbourne House take the credit for this one, and you can still find it on the shelves, complete with copy of Tolkien's book of the same name, lots of graphics, and some very tricky puzzles.

FANTASIA DIAMOND: Hewson Consultant's *Heathrow Air Traffic Control* has been one of the longest selling arcade games around, and this text-and-graphics adventure deserves similar popularity. The pics are good, and so are the characters, some of whom are uncommonly intelligent. The Pilgrim is particularly enamoured of the little toy robot, who really does seem to have a mind of his own.

LORDS OF TIME: All Level 9's games are worth considering, but this happens to be one of the Pilgrim's faves. Mammoths, tooth-fairies, sabre-tooth tigers, you name it, this game might have it. Play it and find out.

CASTLE BLACKSTAR: CDS aren't generally known as an adventure software house, so this game hasn't had the acclaim (or the marketing) it deserves. A text-only challenge in the grand tradition – if you enjoy *Colossal Adventure* then this will be right up your street. Mind you, it's pretty tricky, so don't expect to finish it in a day, or even two. It actually forms part of a trilogy, and the second part should be with us next year. Since the programmers, SCR Adventures, claim to have developed an adventure system on a par with the one used by the American company Infocom (who produce ultra-state-of-the-art programs) the sequel to *Castle Blackstar* should be something quite special.

HEROES OF KARN: Converted from a Commodore 64 original, this game from Interceptor unfortunately lost some very nice music. However, the graphics are superb (as are the pics in all Interceptor adventures) and the challenge considerable. Not for beginners, or for those wanting lengthy text descriptions (they're short in the extreme in this game), but good for the puzzle-solving addicts who know a nice graphic when they see one.

RING OF DARKNESS: Wintersoft, who produce this Dungeons-and-Dragons graphics adventure, used to write for the Dragon micro. It's nice to see them back in the market-place, and this game is one of the few games of its type for the Arnold. You create a character, complete with intelligence, hit points, and agility, and then explore the landscape, mostly fighting and eating and finding treasure. Possibly a little dated graphically, but let's hope Wintersoft bring out some original Amstrad material soon. In the meantime this is definitely worth a try for those who don't mind an absence of text and a lot of blood-letting.

GREMLINS: One of the Adventure International offerings, this game has some great graphics and some VERY tricky puzzles. As a general rule, you can rely on Adventure International to come up with a good game, but it remains to be seen how many of their titles will be translated for the Amstrad machines. Watch out, however, for the Marvel superhero series – *The Hulk* and *Spiderman* are coming 'as soon as we've got time', and both are excellent games, if rather difficult to complete without some expert assistance – but then you can always check out this column for help!

ADVENTURE NEWS



State of the Art

Interceptor have set new standards for graphics in adventure games, even if the text is a bit on the skimpy side. Now they're claiming to have produced a game with pictures 'far superior' to anything that's gone before. *Warlord* boasts 100 locations plus pics, and has you take the role of a Celtic warrior battling against your Roman counterpart. Sounds like a must for adventurers and art students alike at £8.99.

Robin of Sherwood

Adventure International are promising that this game will be on the shelves by the time you read this. Priced at £9.95, it sounds like a promising buy, with graphics similar in style to those on *Gremlins*.

Level 9 loading

Level 9 have revealed how to load cassette versions of their games onto the CPC 664. For *Colossal*, *Quest*, *Dungeon*, *Snowball* and *Lords of Time* enter: |TAPE

```
MEMORY&2FF
```

Then LOAD"ADVENTURE", &3000

Start the tape and press any key. When it's loaded type

```
CALL &3000
```

For *Eden*, *Emerald Isle* and *Red Moon* a simple |TAPE and RUN"" before starting the tape should do the trick.

Level 9 should have disk versions available later this year and are promising cheap upgrades to cassette owners.

Micro-Mega-Game?

Micromega, who have produced some really excellent arcade games including *3D Deathchase* and *Jasper* for the Spectrum, are rumoured to have produced a version of their graphics adventure *Kentilla* for the Amstrad. *Kentilla*, originally available for the Spectrum, is a challenging game with some very attractive graphics and good fight sequences, not to mention some rather obscure opponents. The game is meant apparently to be released by Amsoft, but as yet no confirmation has been forthcoming. Watch this space.

Daring the Darkon

Arcade software house Taskset (of *Super Pipeline* and *Jammin'* fame) are turning their hand to adventures. First in line is *Souls of Darkon*, a text and graphics game set on a far-off planet where you, as a space-age gladiator, must rescue your pals from the evil Darkon. The game features complex input, 100 plus locations, and interactive characters, including a Handy Hovering Spherical Friend called Komputa. Sounds an intriguing package (priced at £8.90), and it's very good news to hear of another software house entering the adventure market.



This Great Game now available for . . .
COMMODORE 64
AMSTRAD and
SPECTRUM
Wizard's Lair
Bubble Bus Software, 87 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1RX, England Telephone: 0732 355962 Telex: 95151

CHEAT MODE

The section where your tips, pokes and devious game-busting ploys are relayed to the nation

This is it folks – the hottest section in town for getting the low-down on the tips and the pokes that can transform your gameplaying, if not your life. You want to beat a game by outplaying it? Or maybe you just want to poke it so you can cheat your way to the finish? Well this is the place for you, mate.

We'll be giving playing tips from ace games players and the authors of the games themselves, while the Special Ops boys will be poking around in the back-room to tell you how to win the underhand way. We'll also be printing fabulous maps – like DUN DARACH in this issue – to help out any souls lost in the complexity of a game.

You can be a part of these pages because you're the experts – well, some of you – and we want you to tell us how you succeed. Send us your tips and pokes and we'll test them out so we can bring them to everyone on these pages – along with your name. There's also the little matter of our huge reward. Immmortality and riches beyond your wildest dreams can be yours just through your games-playing skill.

Blurb Writer X

Finding Karl's Treasure

If you're having trouble living long enough to complete *Karl's Treasure Hunt*, a Software Super Saver, then run this listing before loading the game and you'll get yourself 100 lives.

```
10 Memory 12288
 20 For f=1 to 3:load"":next
 30 Poke 38102,100
 40 Call 36864
```

Close Encounters with *Airwolf*

Our own, our very own, Bob Wade reveals the information you need to get on your way in Elite's subterrannean 'copter caper. The rest is up to you.

On the first screen ignore the wall and control box since shooting these appears to achieve nothing yet. Descend a screen and blast through the wall using smooth up and down motions and rapid firing close to the barrier. Once you've cleared a hole big enough, go through to the third screen.

Here you'll come up against a robot. You can either squeeze over the top of him or wait till he travels to the left of the screen and sneak between him and the wall. Once again, ignore the control box since this seems to do nothing.

Pause at the beginning of the next screen until the pole with the ring round it is heading away from you then surge forward and off the top of the screen. You are now under the sinisterly-marked rockets and should hover on this screen, WITHOUT scrolling off at any time. Eventually the robot on the right moves across to the left, allowing you to slip past and onto the next screen.

Here you should wait until the robot is heading away from you and then follow it until you can nip underneath it to where there is a force field. Once the robot moves left again, go up to the next screen where a security camera is patrolling. Fly underneath this and bomb the control box between two blue spheres.

If you now descend a screen you should find that the force field has disappeared and you can descend to another screen. This one is real nasty, but shooting through the wall on the left will take you back to the screen below the rocket screen where the pole with the ring on it is. And that's where we'll leave you, hovering around in search of the way through the next wall.

One last clue – scroll onto the rocket screen so that your tail appears in the wall and kills you, then watch what happens to the rocket exhausts. You might see something to your advantage.

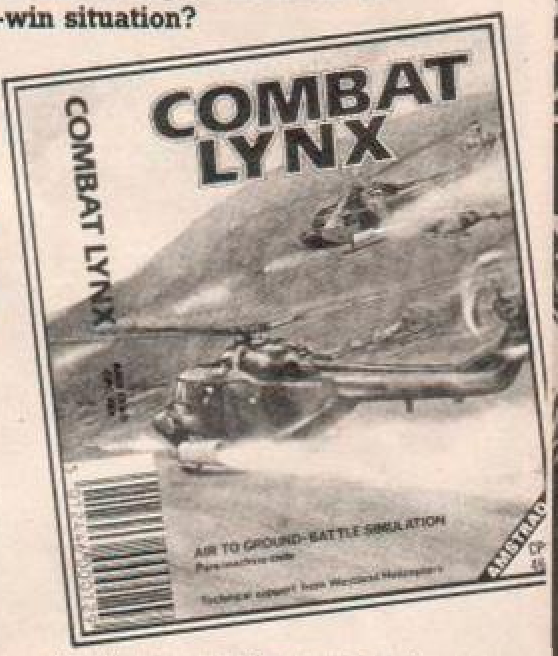
Blowing *Short's Fuse*

This cheapo platform game from Firebird has five screens based around a monument. You can access any of the screens using a three digit code. So if you're finding it all just too much, sit back, relax and type in these codes.

Taj Mahal 000
Eiffel Tower 446
Industrial Plant 297
Big Ben 349
Oriental House 125

Winning at *Combat Lynx*

Robert White of Durell Software gives the lowdown on how to make the most of the all-action flight simulator. Is this what we might call a no-win situation?



'Winning' at *Combat Lynx* is not a likely proposition, but here are a few tips on how to survive for just a little bit longer.

About 20 enemy vehicles will be trundling towards each of your bases, including Base 1. After wiping out any of the bases other than Base 1 those vehicles are then re-directed to join the forces moving against Base 1.

It is essential that you protect Base 1 as this is your only inexhaustible supply of troops and fuel, so your first two missions should be to lay eight minefields around it in a complete square since enemy tanks can attack it diagonally. The minefields can be breached by two enemy tanks hitting them, so to play safe you could place the minefields two squares wide. If you take too long Base 2 may get wiped out while you're protecting Base 1. Make sure you don't land on the minefields by mistake and for heaven's sake don't drop mines on any of the bases.

By the time you've laid the minefield you'll probably be getting reports of attacks on the other bases. These may not always be instantly fatal but you are well advised to respond as quickly as possible. Load up with some wire-guided anti-tank missiles, a few mines and the maximum quantity of heat-seeking air-to-air missiles and fly to support the attacked base.

You'll gain a higher score and efficiency rating from the effective use of air-to-air weapons (as you will have more target opportunities and aircraft targets offer more points) but you will not be able to carry a maximum load of anti-tank, anti-aircraft and mine weapons at the same time. Note that the other bases have only a limited supply of mines, so you will need to bring extra mines from Base 1 each time you fly out.

If you go for a high-score too soon in the game your bases will suffer from inadequate ground support. After their demise Base 1 will come under heavy attack, after which the battle will come to a fairly rapid and unpleasant con-







clusion.

The unguided weapon systems are difficult to use (as you must aim the helicopter without crashing) and relatively ineffective, but they do offer substantial gains in saving weight. NEVER attack an enemy field-gun, as they seem to be lethal against slow-flying helicopters. ALWAYS attack enemy lorries and tanks from behind – they won't fire back in this position.

As you deplete the enemy hardware you will receive reports of enemy reinforcements coming in at a given location. If you quickly head to that co-ordinate position you should have a real 'turkey-shoot' as all the reinforcements will still be close together. If you can wipe out the enemy reinforcements faster than they enter the battle you could possibly 'win'. But I doubt it!

Hole Out at Golf

If you're having trouble lowering your handicap at Amsoft's *Amsgolf*, then here are three handicap codes that should get you started and some tips to help you get it even lower.

To get handicaps of 15, 13 or 11 you should input A6P12, B0X24 or J1T93 respectively. The effect this has is to enable you to hit the ball with Jack Nicklaus-style power.

Now you've got a lower handicap there are few things that should get it even lower. Always use a driver off the tee and, unless at a short hole, where you can take a chance on reaching the green in one, aim it at direction four in order to avoid hitting the tree if you slice.

Use the driver at maximum strength if you're still a long way from the hole, even if you're in the rough. This will lead to more slices and hooks but as long as you plan for those possibilities in your direction you'll be OK.

When you're in close to the hole you want to hit the green without mistakes so always use an iron that can hit the green with strength 5 or 6. Once on the green, the strength of the putt can be judged roughly by the table below.

Yards	Strength
1-3	1
4-6	2
7-9	3
10-12	4
13-15	5

Above 15 yards it is difficult to hole a putt, so it is better to leave it just short for a tap rather than whack it and leave a tough one back. Remember, you can still miss from 4-6 yards, so play safe.

You should now be able to par plenty of holes and even get the occasional birdie if you're lucky.

Poking Punchy

These pokes for *Mr Punchy* from Amsoft/Mr.Micro will let you complete the game with ease – if you want to do that – as well as rack up a huge high-score.



First clear the memory and then input this line:

Memory 8191:load"code",8192

For a hard game now enter:

For a=11320 to 11335:poke a,255:next:call 8192

Or for an easy game enter:

For a=11320 to 11335:poke a,33:next:call 8192

giving you a sausage and magic carpet on every screen.

Alternatively , define your own game by first typing this line instead of either of the previous two:

For a=11320 to 11335:print a;peek(a);:next

This gives the memory location of each screen with their poke values. To change each screen use the formula:

Poke X,Y

where X is the memory location and Y is the sum of any of the values below. These will cause the respective items to appear on the screen as long as your arithmetic has been correct.

Punchy = 128
Ghosts = 64
Carpets = 32
Custards on top = 16
Custards on bottom = 16
Tomatoes on top = 4
Tomatoes on bottom = 2
Sausages = 1

So to get a carpet, sausage and ghosts on screen you would type in the line:

Poke 11320,97

Once you've defined all the screens type:

Call 8192

to start the game.

Sussing Sorcery

If you can't work out which objects release which sorcerors in Virgin's classic *Sorcery* then feast your eyes on this. The key tells you which objects you need where – all you've got to do now is find them.

LOCATION	OBJECT
Wastelands	Goblet
In the Palace	The Little Lyre
In the Chateau	Golden Chalice
In the Chateau 2	Spell Book
Stonehenge	Sorceror's Moon
In the Tunnel	Magic Wand
Strongroom	Crown
Dungeons	Scroll

£300 REWARD

As a wee incentive to you all to get your act together and supply the goods, we're offering not just one, not even two, but THREE fabulous prizes of £100 worth of hardware and software of your choice to the fanatics who send in before Christmas:

The best set, or sets, of pokes.
The best playing tips.
The best map.

Quality is more important than quantity – a sackload of rotting pokes for *Sultan's Maze* or a map of *Tasword* aren't going to do your chances much good. We want detailed maps of the BIG games, we want the pokes that reach the parts other pokes forget, we want the tips that will put muscles on your high-scores. So put your prowess to good use and give yourself the chance of an extra-special present this Christmas.

Send your entries, clearly marked with your name, address and, if possible, phone number, to: Cheat Mode, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS

Defend – don't Die

Here's another little scorcher, which will give you 99 lives and 99 smart bombs on Alligata's *Defend or Die*. All you have to do is type in the program and run it to load the game with the desired changes.

```
10 Memory &3fff
20 Load "defend or die"
30 Poke &64e4,&99
40 Poke &64e9,&99
100 Call &4025
```

Amsclub

Many of the tips and pokes on these pages have been supplied by the members of Amsclub, the independent Amstrad User Club. Thanks to Mrs E.J. Moores for the *Punchy* pokes, Ingo Koehler for the *Ghostbusters* account number and to David Baxter and Kenny Bull for the *Karl's Treasure Hunt* pokes. Special thanks to these last two for their painstaking work in mapping *Dun Darach* and to David for compiling all the tips for us.

If you want any more information about Amsclub, send a SAE to David Baxter – the club's founder – at: **42 Mount Stewart St., Carluke, Lanarkshire, Scotland ML8 5EB**



FU-KUNG IN LAS VEGAS

Amsoft/Romik, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This oriental gentleman is an undercover US marshal who has to check out all the casinos in Las Vegas to see if they're honest . He does this by seeing if you can pick up all four playing cards in difficult positions on a screen full of – I knew it! – PLATFORMS.

The star (?) is a little Chinaman with a pointy hat, who has a terribly slow walk and an equally slow jump with whining sound effect to match. The four playing cards he has to get are one of each suit and he just has to walk through them to pick them up.

Placed around the screens are lots of obstacles, monsters and fatal drops that will send you back to the start of the screen with all the cards back in place. Which of those obstacles is fatal depends on your choice of either the easy or hard games. On the hard level some objects, like the purple bumps on the floors and ceiling, are activated and become lethal.

> SECOND OPINION
>
> ***I've racked my brains to find something good to say about this game, but I haven't been able to come up with anything. So I'll repeat the bad points instead: horrible graphics, worse sound, silly scenario.***
>
> PC

One nasty feature that crops up on many screens are the laser beams that intermittently flash on between two points, killing you if you're caught in them. Most others are moving objects that shuttle about either horizontally or vertically on a fixed path so that you have to carefully time your progress past them.

Block graphics make up all the screens with the only really good pieces being the dissolving floors and some of the moving objects. The background colour is a rather dingy grey. The only sound effects are the horrid jumping noise and some staccato footsteps.

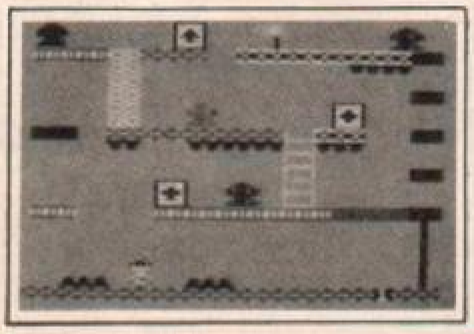
G O O D   N E W S

- You can switch off the game.

B A D   N E W S

- Slow movement.
- Blocky graphics.
- Bad sound effects.
- No reward in getting further in the game.
- More like a magazine listing than a commercial game.

GRAPHICS	22%
SONICS	14%
GRAB FACTOR	23%
STAYING POWER	31%
A A RATING	24%



CYRUS II CHESS

Amsoft, £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk, keys only

This is computer chess with an extra dimension – the third dimension. It presents you with a stunning 3D display which surely spells extinction for the old-fashioned 2D graphics we've all lost to so many times. What *Cyrus* doesn't do is spell the end of losing to chess games, because it's a horribly strong program. The graphics use only blue, black and white, but by sophisticated use of shading it seems as if a much wider range is being employed. The board appears suspended on a background of black space and is tilted towards you so that the white pieces are at the bottom of the screen and the black ones at the top. Each individual piece is clearly defined and then shaded to give an excellent impression of solidity.

But when you actually move this impression fades – in a most amusing way. The pieces actually seem to wobble as they slide from square to square, as if they were made in jelly-moulds. Strangely, this somehow improves the program as you're always interested in watching the display. Another nice touch is that pieces merge when they capture – two pawns become one, a knight changes into a bishop, and so on.

All this would be very pretty but very useless if the program didn't play a decent game. Unfortunately for the human ego, it does. And very quickly too. At Level 1 it moves almost instantly yet with considerable sharpness. At Level 3 – usually the level at which computer chess games start to get stroppy – it never takes more than 30 seconds and always comes up with a move that will cause you trouble. Even at Level 9 the average response is only 14 minutes.

> SECOND OPINION
>
> *Chess games don't often get rave reviews but this certainly deserves it. The graphics are excellent and I found it played a good game even on level one. It should suit anyone from the novice to the grandmaster. With this display it's too attractive to miss.*
>
> BW

Cyrus has considerable knowledge of book openings and more than holds its own in the murky waters of the middle-game. It generally plays aggressively, but – at Level 3 – didn't quite have the killer instinct in a close end-game. The program has all the usual features, enabling you to print out, set up problems, change sides and even get hints from the computer. Frankly, I wouldn't trust it. *Cyrus* is out to win.

PC



BEACH-HEAD

US Gold/Amsoft, £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk

A combination of air, naval and tank battles which forms a six-stage attempt to destroy a fortress called Kuhn-Lin. You begin on a map of the coastline, not far from the fortress.

You control a cursor and have a choice whether to navigate a narrow sea- passage or attack an enemy naval fleet head on. If you tackle the passage you have to guide ten ships from the bottom right of the screen to the top left, avoiding mines and torpedoes that randomly cross the channel.

Once your ships are passed or sunk you progress to the air attack stage that you would encounter if you engaged the enemy fleet, the difference being that the battle is shorter if you use the passage. Aircraft approach from the horizon to attack your ships and have to be shot down with your ship's twin cannon. The planes drop bombs and you lose a ship if enough damage is done.

If you survive the air-attack the enemy fleet that was present on screen starts to shell you. Your gun now has to find the range of the ships by changing the elevation and then sink them all. The enemy salvoes may cause you to lose more ships but a healthy bonus is awarded for destroying the escaping aircraft carrier.

You now move onto the beach-head itself where you are given two tanks per surviving ship up to the number of eight. These must be driven through a right- to-left scrolling screen of obstacles and defences. Most hazards are static but the occasional gun-emplacement or

> SECOND OPINION
>
> *It's good to see this very enjoyable multi-blast on the Amstrad. There are lots of different tasks, some straightforward, others pretty tricky. The ship and air-attack sections are very classy, although the tank-attack suffers from the machine's jerky scrolling. Overall, it's very good value.*
>
> PC

The Enemy

PASSAGE
Torpedoes: Cross channel at random – but there are one or two safe spots.
Mines: Never move and aren't hard to avoid.
AIR ATTACK
Fighters: Approach over the horizon and should be shot before they drop bombs.
Reconnaisance: Fly across screen and are worth good bonus points.

NAVAL ATTACK
Aircraft Carrier: Tries to escape and scores massive bonus if sunk.
Battleships: Very dangerous and should be sunk next.
Other ships: Less dangerous but still need to be dispatched quickly.

TANK STAGE
Obstacles: Can't be shot and must be carefully driven round.
Gun emplacements: Sit still, usually in middle of screen,and fire one shell at a time.
Tanks: Move up and down screen and fire one shell at a time.

FORTRESS STAGE
Windows: Ten to be shot with a slight drift to the right on shells.
Cannon: Never misses your tank but there is time to hit three windows with one tank.



White has checked with the bishop and black responds by interposing its own bishop.

The 2D option

If you can't stand the realism of 3D you can change to the kind of 2D display used by more conventional chess programs. The only advantage of this is that when a move has been decided, the piece changes squares like greased lightning instead of moving in the stately wobble of the 3D display. So it's quicker to get beaten.

G O O D   N E W S

- Superb 3D display.
- Easy entry of moves.
- Powerful game.
- Very speedy response.

B A D   N E W S

- Powerful game.
- Can be humiliating.

GRAPHICS	90%
SONICS	5%
GRAB FACTOR	95%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	92%

tank will pop up in your path to fire shells at you and will have to be dispatched by your own gun-turret.

The last stage is the fortress itself which is displayed with a large cannon on top and ten windows in the side. These light up one at a time and you have to shoot them with your tank gun. You have to control both its position along the bottom of the screen and its elevation.

The cannon swivels to face you and will always destroy your tank unless you have hit all ten windows. This means that several tanks are needed to destroy the fortress and if losses were too heavy early in the game you won't have enough tanks to do the job. Success sees the cannon explode and a white flag waves at you from the shattered remains.

BW

G O O D   N E W S

- Different stages of action.
- Good graphics on all sections.
- Testing gameplay throughout.
- Random element keeps you constantly under pressure.
- Fast, blasting action.

B A D   N E W S

- Sections can become repetitive.
- Navigating the passage can be too unpredictable for comfort.

GRAPHICS	87%
SONICS	37%
GRAB FACTOR	85%
STAYING POWER	80%
A A RATING	82%

A plane nears the completion of its attack run.

Your guns swing to meet the attacker.

The carrier which tries to escape.



Still plenty of ships left.

ARNHEM

CCS, £9.95 cass, keys only

The paratroop assault on the Dutch town of Arnhem during the second world war was one of the Allies' more disastrous failures. The plan was daring in its conception and many think it could have succeeded given different circumstances. This is your chance to create that situation and alter the course of history.

The game takes place on a large scrolling map covering the area from south of Eindhoven to just north of Arnhem. There are five different game scenarios, four of which concern only parts of the battle, the fifth actually running through the whole thing. The shortest game should last for an hour, while the complete campaign will last for an exhausting six or seven.

One, two or three players can take part controlling the British, American and German forces respectively. In the one player game the computer controls the German forces and you control both Allied forces. With two players, one controls the Germans and with three players someone also separately controls the Americans.

The screen shows one area of the map along with the date and time, the unit you are controlling and any reports. Within each scenario are a set number of turns, with three turns occuring in a day. Turns are subdivided into first mechanical phase, non-mechanical phase and the second mechanical phase. Motorised units can move in the first and third phases and other units in the second.

Each unit is placed under your control in

SECOND OPINION

This is certainly the best war game I've seen on the Amstrad. Display and scrolling are both impressive, the map is big and the game is demanding. I particularly appreciated being offered a coice of scenarios. The only real disappointment was the sound – the beeps and burbles when battle commences are weak, to say the least.

PC

turn and you then have several options as to what to do with it. Many airborne units have to be landed to start with and this can only be done in clear areas. A series of options now appears. Report will tell you the strength, effectiveness, morale, attack modifier and unit size, all of which contribute to the unit's overall fighting capacity. Digging in will partially protect the unit from attack but doesn't hinder its own attacking capabilities.

Artillery can bombard units from a distance making them vulnerable to attack. The Travel and Change Size orders both affect the size of a unit. Travel temporarily condenses the size of a unit for road travel while Change Size will change between condensed and expanded units. The smaller unit size also allows units to cross bridges but makes them vulnerable to attack and they cannot attack.

If you merely wish to move a unit it is done with the cursor keys. The distance that a unit can travel is restricted by its type and the terrain it is travelling over. When you want to attack it is done simply by moving adjacent to the enemy. At the end of the movement phase all battles will be resolved.

The scrolling map is well drawn and the units are large and easy to operate. The computer does most of the tedious work for you leaving you to plan overall strategies and tactics. Certainly a good war game, particularly if you like fighting against the odds.





GOOD NEWS

- Good map and unit graphics.
- Large playing area.
- A really tough battle faces you.
- Options for one, two or three players.
- Absorbing strategy and battle tactics.

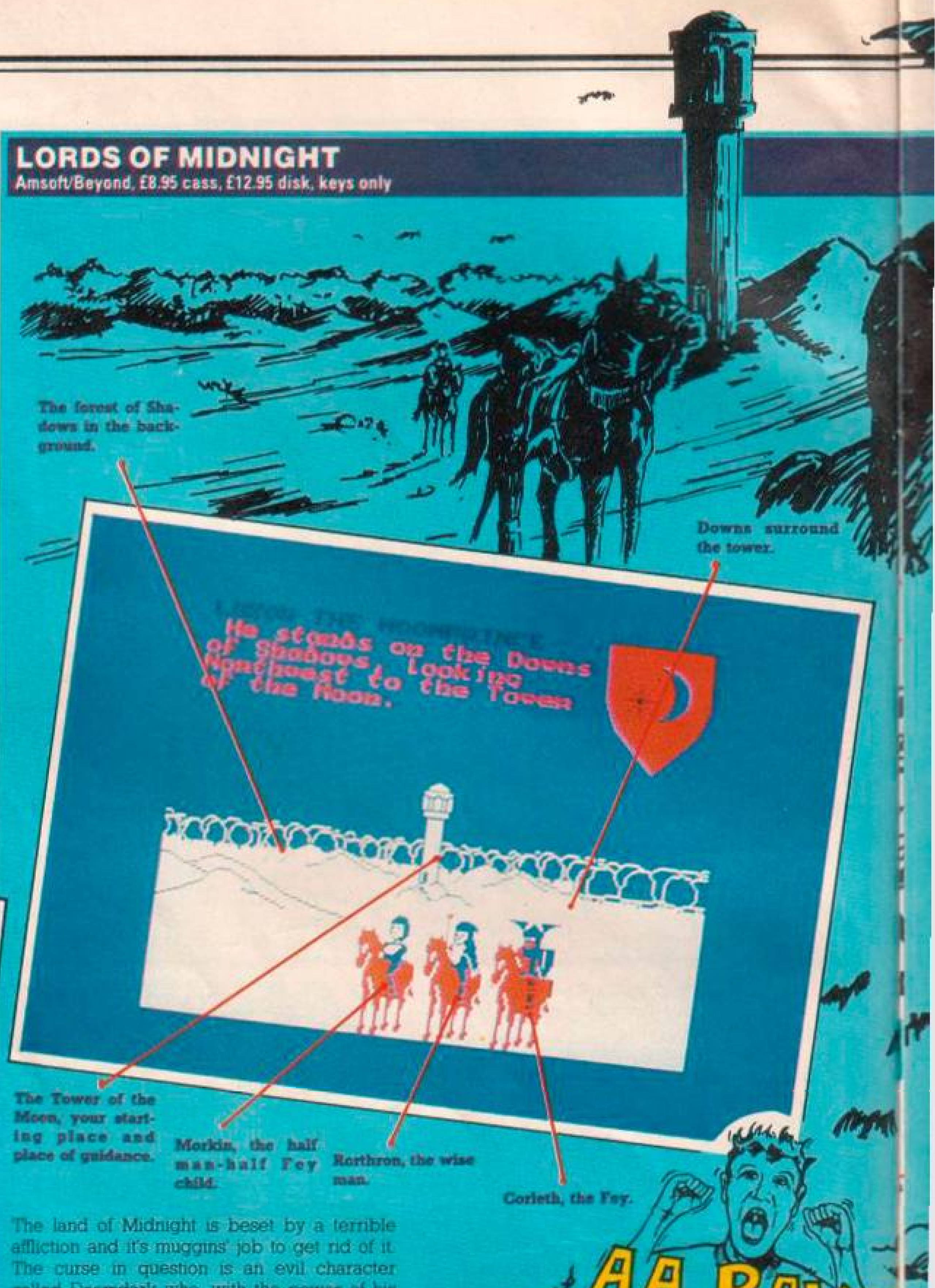
BAD NEWS

- Little in the way of sound effects.
- Won't suit pacifists.

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	11%
GRAB FACTOR	75%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	76%

LORDS OF MIDNIGHT

Amsoft/Beyond, £8.95 cass, £12.95 disk, keys only



The forest of Shadows in the background.

Downs surround the tower.

The Tower of the Moon, your starting place and place of guidance.

Morkin, the half man-half Fey child.

Rorthron, the wise man.

Corleth, the Fey.

The land of Midnight is beset by a terrible affliction and it's muggins' job to get rid of it. The curse in question is an evil character called Doomdark who, with the power of his Ice Crown, is out to plunge the land into eternal winter – not a happy prospect. You must control many characters in order to defeat Doomdark, either in battle or by destroying the Ice Crown.

You begin the quest in control of four characters including Morkin, who is the only one who can destroy the Crown, and Luxor, who must lead the armies in battle. All four characters start at the Tower of the Moon where there are eight possible compass views. Each view is of the landscape surrounding you and there are a total of 32,000 (4,000 locations) in the game.

You can move through the landscape and all the different features that appear including mountains, citadels, forests, towers, keeps and lakes. These are related to each other in an entirely logical way – as you move in any one direction scenery at first visible in the distance grows larger. At certain locations you may find recruits to your cause, new characters to control, advice or just rest from your weary task. Also on the screen will be shown the ·nies or enemies that lie ahead of you.

You can move during the day and once all your characters have done everything they can you can make night fall which is when Doomdark's forces move and the results of battles between armies are calculated. During the day the characters have a range of options whereby they can move, think, choose or look.

SECOND OPINION

The huge amount of instructions was a daunting enough sight, but was as nothing compared to the game itself, which boggled my mind and my boredom threshold. I confess – I just didn't have a whole weekend free to admire the 32,000 different views. If you haven't got that sort of time and patience, you won't really enjoy it.

PC



This allows them to perform various functions like investigating their surroundings and moving about them. When you move the terrain will affect how much can be done in a day and the condition of your forces.

Morkin is the only character who can venture into the northern areas of the map with any safety since the Ice Fear will grip the other characters. However he is vulnerable and if you should lose both Luxor and Morkin then Doomdark will be victorious.

The combination of war-game and adventure means you can play one or other or both depending on which you prefer – but either will take a long while to complete. The graphics are exceptionally good and with so many detailed locations mapping is strongly recommended.

BW

G O O D N E W S

- Stunningly original game-play.
- 4,000 detailed locations.
- Two game-aims in one.
- A tremendous lasting challenge.
- Multi-character control guaranteeing a different game every time.
- Great fun exploring the land and its mysteries.
- Marvellously atmospheric instructions and game.

B A D N E W S

- Terribly depressing to lose a long, hard fought game.
- No sound at all.

GRAPHICS	90%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	86%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	91%

Midnight's Terrain

MOUNTAINS: restrict movement and sap strength.
CITADELS: place to recruit Lords, shelter and defend.
FORESTS: slow but safe since forest folk hate Doomdark.
TOWERS: homes of the wise where you may find help.
HENGES: may have strange powers.
VILLAGES: provide shelter if friendly.
DOWNS: slow you slightly and may hide danger.
KEEPS: provide troops, protection and rest.
SNOWHALLS: offer good shelter.
LAKES: powers of healing and revival.
FROZEN WASTE: impenetrable.
RUINS: sometimes dangerous but can afford good protection.
LITHS: often have magical powers.
CAVERNS: give shelter to all including undesirables.
ARMIES: move around and could be friend or foe.

NONTERRAQUEOUS

Mastertronic, £1.99 cass, jyostick or keys

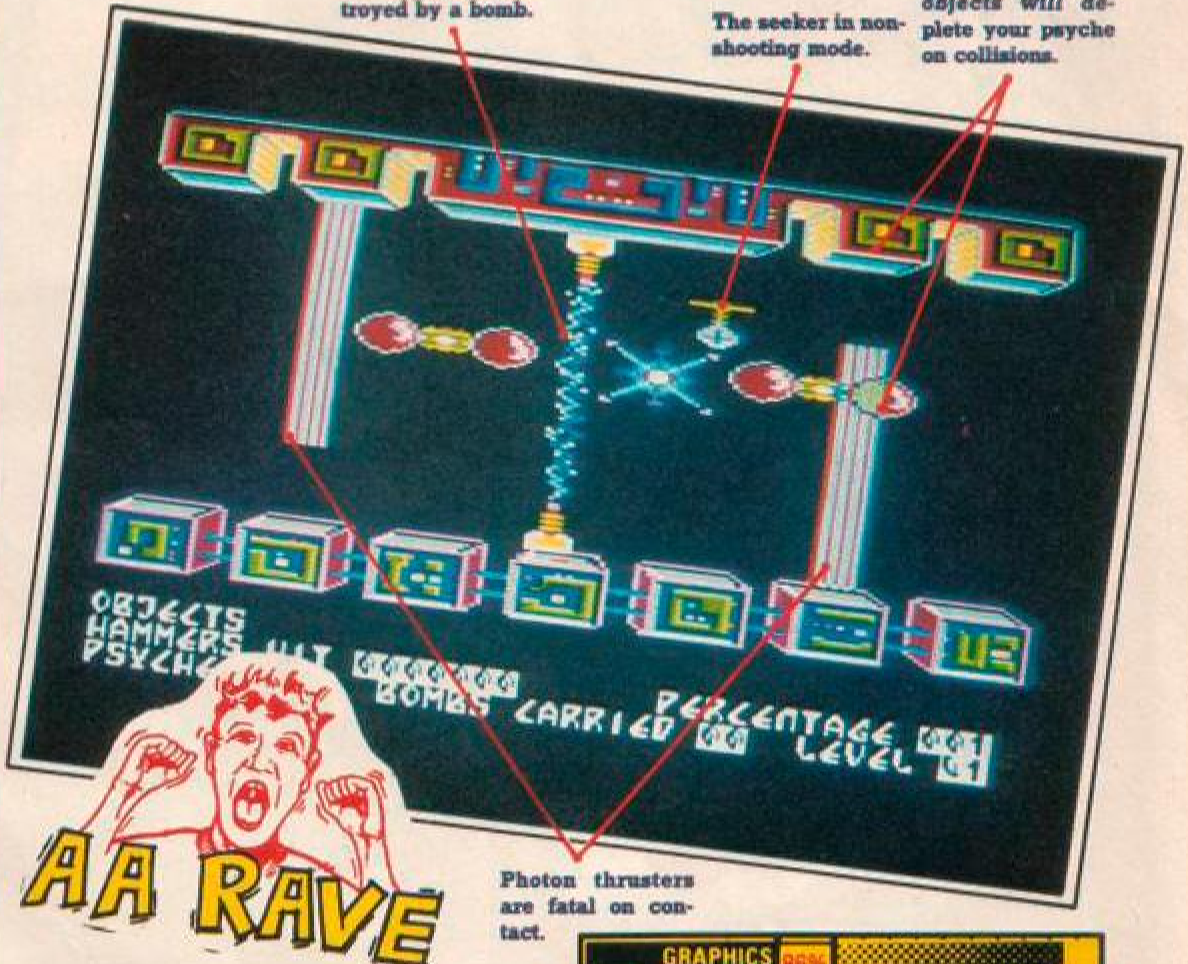
'Not of the earth or the sea' is how the title is explained, which is about as much sense as you'll get when you're controlling a robot 'seeker' around a futuristic 1,000 screens. Your task is to find a computer base which you have to destroy. Needless to say this will involve traversing most of the screens and completing a number of tasks.

The screens are composed of three types of border with open ends where you can move onto another one. Within each screen are a number of static bits of machinery and several types of moving robots. These can drain your psyche – your energy – although some are more harmful then others. Screens with a single humming object are dangerous while ones with three objects or just blocks are fairly harmless, draining only a little through collisions.

SECOND OPINION

Excellent graphics – indeed, excellent everything – for a cheapo game. At 1,000 screens you're going to find it's not just your robot's psyche that gets drained. Extra class is added by Mastertronic's multi-lingual instructions and the faint warble of Bach on the speaker. A French Suite, I think. Or was it one of the English? Do let us know if you can tell.

PC



Your seeker can take two forms, one which shoots and one which doesn't. You change between these at SWOP machines. When in shoot mode you can destroy the 'hammers' that appear in threes on screen. In either mode you can pick up psyche energy from some static objects or pick up a bomb or other object.

The two main other dangers are photon thrusters and force field beams. Thrusters oscillate from the edges of screens and are instantly fatal to you so you have to move onto screens carefully so as not to run headlong into one. Force fields appear across a screen and the only way to get past them is to explode a bomb which can also kill you if you're too close when it goes off.

All the borders and objects are done in detailed multi-colour and look very good. Things get particularly colourful when you start shooting your ever-changing laser beam. If you die you're told the reason why so you'll know what to avoid next time. Loading is a little odd with two excellent loading screens but one coming up at the very end of loading for only a couple of seconds in its complete form.

BW

G O O D N E W S

- Over 1,000 screens.
- Detailed, colourful graphics.
- Lots of shooting and avoiding.
- Brainwork required to solve puzzles.
- A steal at this price.

B A D N E W S

- As with all BIG games, screens become samey.
- One careless slip into a photon thruster can end a lot of hard work.

GRAPHICS	86%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	67%
STAYING POWER	88%
A A RATING	88%

SORCERY PLUS
Amsoft/+irgin, £13.95 disk, joystick only

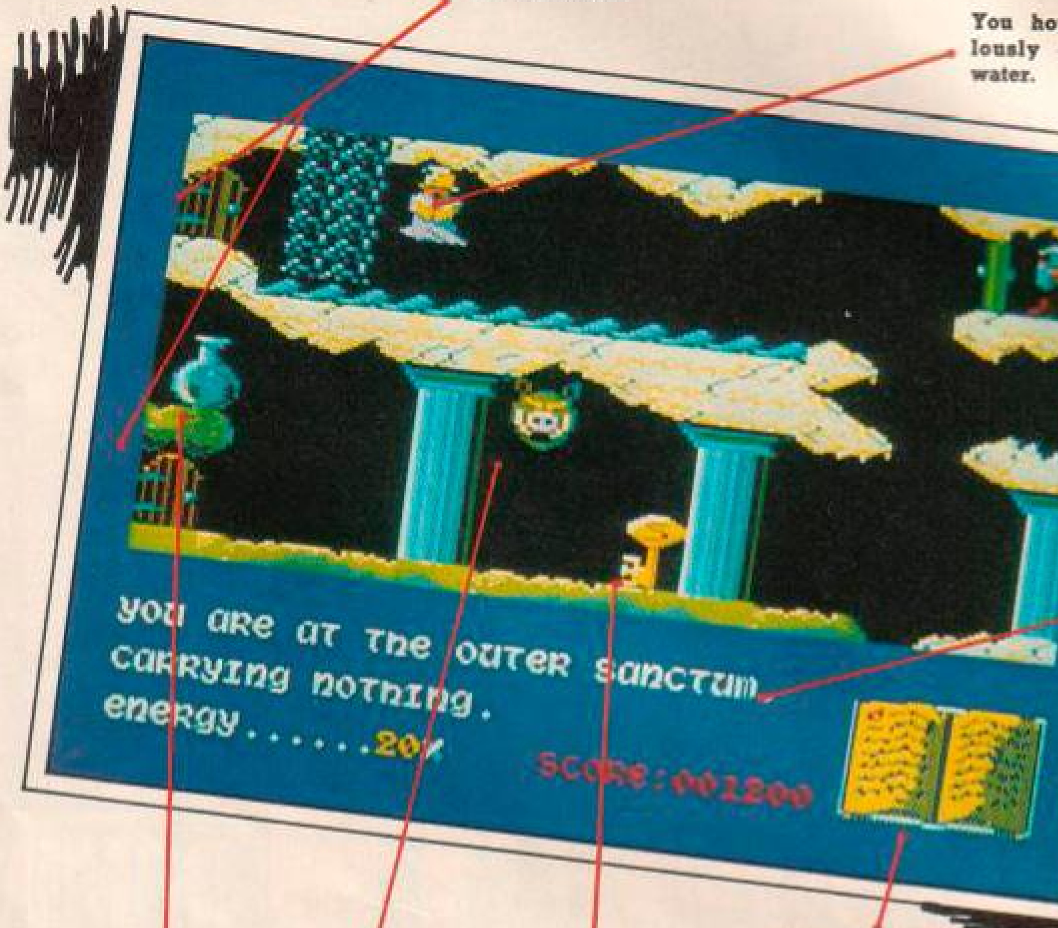
Sorcery was a great seller on cassette and this disk-based version looks ready to set a whole new trend in Arnold games, being bigger and better than before. You're set the same task as in the original – to rescue eight of your fellow sorcerors from where they have been imprisoned by the Necromancer.

The original 40 screens have been expanded to 75 for the disc version. Each one is filled with picturesque scenery, energy-sapping monsters, power-giving cauldrons, masses of objects and the occasional trapped sorceror.

You have to fly around between screens using the wooden doors that creak open and closed as you battle against both a time limit and the constraints of your energy. The sorcerors appear behind doors and to release them you have to be carrying the correct object to unlock the door. Many of the early locations are the same as *Sorcery* with the occasional additional room, but there are whole new sections with totally new scenery and repositioned sorcerors.

The old sections have the same variety of monsters that will sap your energy on contact but can be dispatched with particular weapons found lying around. The new areas have more creatures and different items that will send your foes to their maker. Constant throughout are the risk of drowning in pools of water – always fatal – and the cauldrons that replace your energy when sat on. Or sap it if they're poisoned.

Finding your way around is tougher than ever with the need for mapping even greater. Some doors cannot be opened unless you're



Two exit doors.

You hover perilously over the water.

A large bottle.

A boar's head lies in wait for you.

A key.

The book time limit.

EVERYONE'S A WALLY
Mikro-Gen, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

Wally Week has been making a nuisance of himself for a long time. In this latest escapade he does it in brilliant style with tremendous graphics and animation and a puzzling task to really test the mind.

In this adventure Wally has roped in four friends to help him complete various odd jobs around his home town. You have to control all five characters. You get paid for completing the jobs and your ultimate aim is to unlock the town safe where the wages are kept.

You start off controlling Wally in the town square by the broken fountain. You can switch to any of the other characters if they are on the same screen as you. If they aren't, you can find out which screen they're in at the touch of a key. Each one possesses certain skills which when combined with the right objects will allow you to complete a task like mending the fountain, building a brick wall or restoring the towns electricity supply.

Each character can carry two of the objects which are found lying around the various streets and buildings. However, some objects can't be got at unless you are already carrying another object or are controlling a particular character.

The street graphics are seen from a side view with each of the characters a beautifully-detailed multi-coloured sprite. You make your way around the town by walking off the edge of screens or by moving up when in front of a street leading off at 90 degrees. You enter buildings in the same way where you will encounter lots of nasty energy-sapping creatures. Each character has three bars of endurance energy that can be replenished by eating the food found around town, but certain people like different foods.

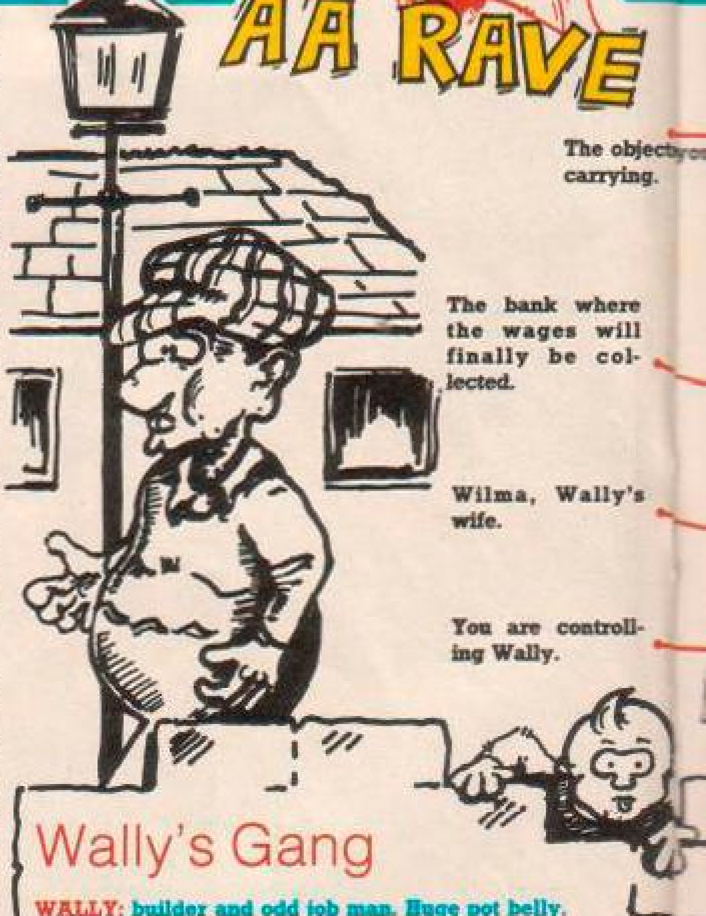
If you die while controlling one character the game ends completely and you'll be told how much money you've earned – but you can postpone the evil hour by switching to another character when energy gets low. You're most vulnerable during one of the two arcade sequences when your energy can suffer greatly.

Completing a task should bring a warm glow of satisfaction but to finish the game will be a tremendous effort. However if you find the going too tough you can always take a break and listen to the 'free' recording of the 'Every-

SECOND OPINION

A lovely game to look at, even if the Weeks are just about the most degenerate family in the entire computer game universe. Unfortunately, I found it desperately hard to play, mainly because your endurance runs out so quickly, but also because I couldn't figure out how to complete the tasks. But maybe I'm just a Wally. Like the 'song' says.

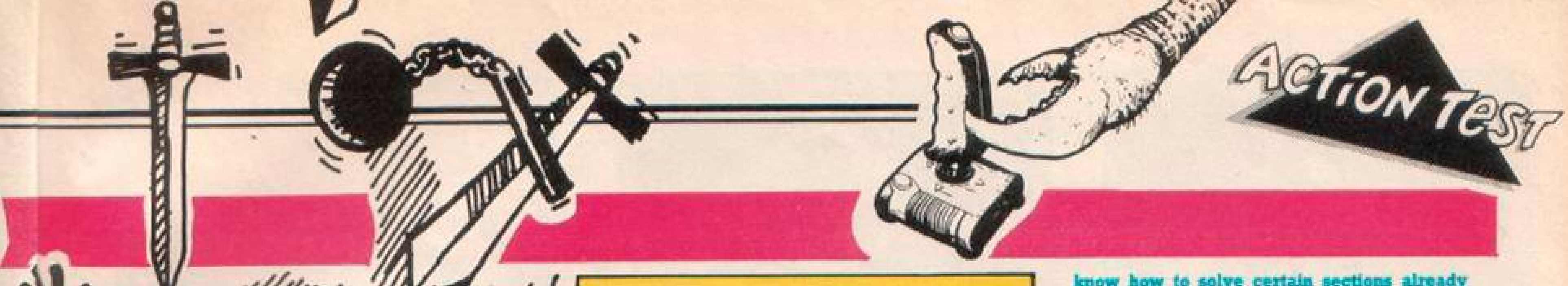
PC



The bank where the wages will finally be collected.

Wilma, Wally's wife.

You are controlling Wally.





You are carrying nothing and so cannot rescue the trapped sorceror.

SECOND OPINION

Absolutely wizard! Superb graphics, smooth movement, and a really intriguing game. It's not going to be an easy one to crack – the first few times I played I didn't even see a wizard, let alone rescue one. There are some very nice touches, such as the leering ghosts, while it's very satisfying to smash your foes to smithereens with the lightning. For disc-owners it must be a must.

PC

carrying a particular object, while trapdoors may prevent you getting hold of a crucial object or getting access to a door. The graphics, sound and playability are as strong as ever and even experienced sorcerors may find themselves struggling to complete what is a much tougher proposition.

Disc Delight

While playing the game you have to leave the disc in the drive and as you move through a door the next screen is loaded. This system means that the game is much bigger, has great demo modes and amusing scrolling messages – and there's still space left. Fortunately the new version isn't too far removed from the cassette one so that players of the original will know how to solve certain sections already but won't be familiar with the whole thing.

The disc also allows you to flatter your ego by saving the high score table with your entries on it. It's much faster of course and you hardly notice a screen being loaded as you move through doors.

If this is anything to go by, the prospects for disc based games are good even if they are more expensive. Hopefully more people will follow Virgin and Amsoft's lead.

BW

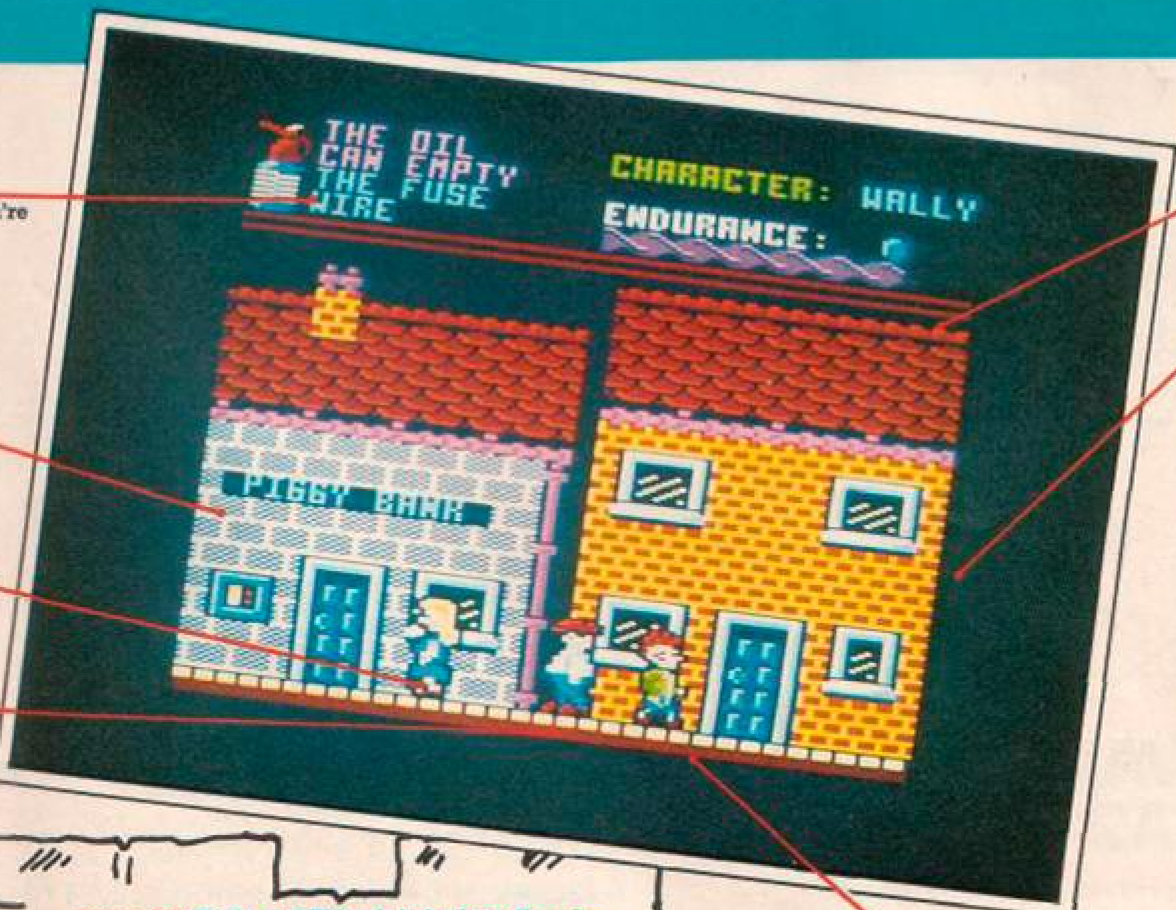
GOOD NEWS

- Colourful, detailed and fast-moving graphics.
- Masses of screens to be explored.
- Bigger and better than its cassette predecessor.
- Fast loading of game and individual screens.
- A tough task whether you've played the original or not.

BAD NEWS

- Disc drives are expensive.
- So are discs.

GRAPHICS	91%
SONICS	70%
GRAB FACTOR	93%
STAYING POWER	93%
A A RATING	91%



jects you're ng.

Wally has only two of his energy bars left.

Wally and Wilma's home where refreshment is sometimes on offer.

Tom the punk mechanic.

HERBERT: Wally and Wilma's baby brat. Crawls round making a nuisance of himself in preparation for his starring role in the next Mikrogen title.
DICK: plumber who rivals Wally in the pot belly stakes.
HARRY: hippy electrician. Hates meat.

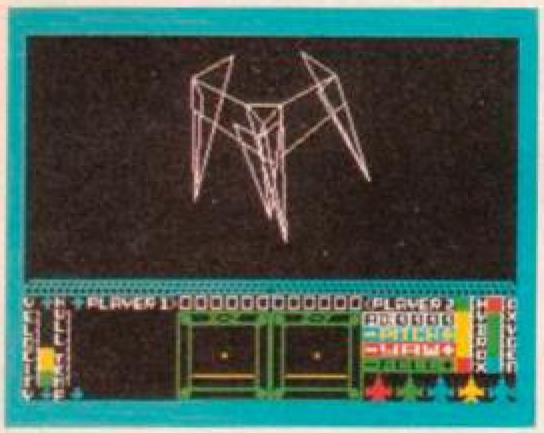
GOOD NEWS

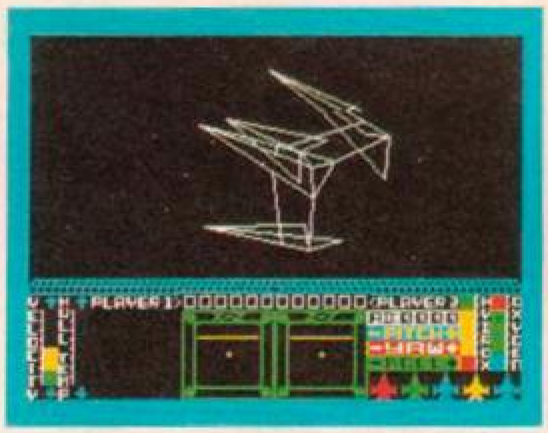
- Brilliant graphics and animation.
- Novel multi-character control.
- Ingenious tasks and skills.
- Will take a long while to solve unaided.
- Exercises both brain and joystick.
- A true arcade-adventure.

BAD NEWS

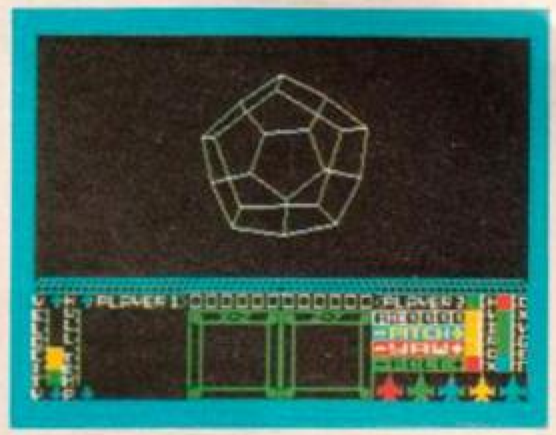
- May take a while to get into without clues.
- Frustrating to complete several tasks and then die through a small error.

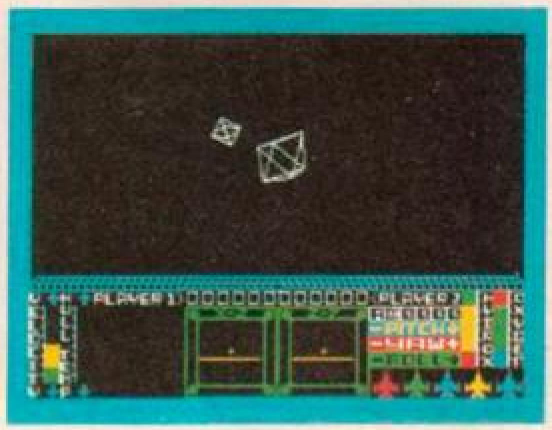
GRAPHICS	94%
SONICS	55%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	94%
A A RATING	92%

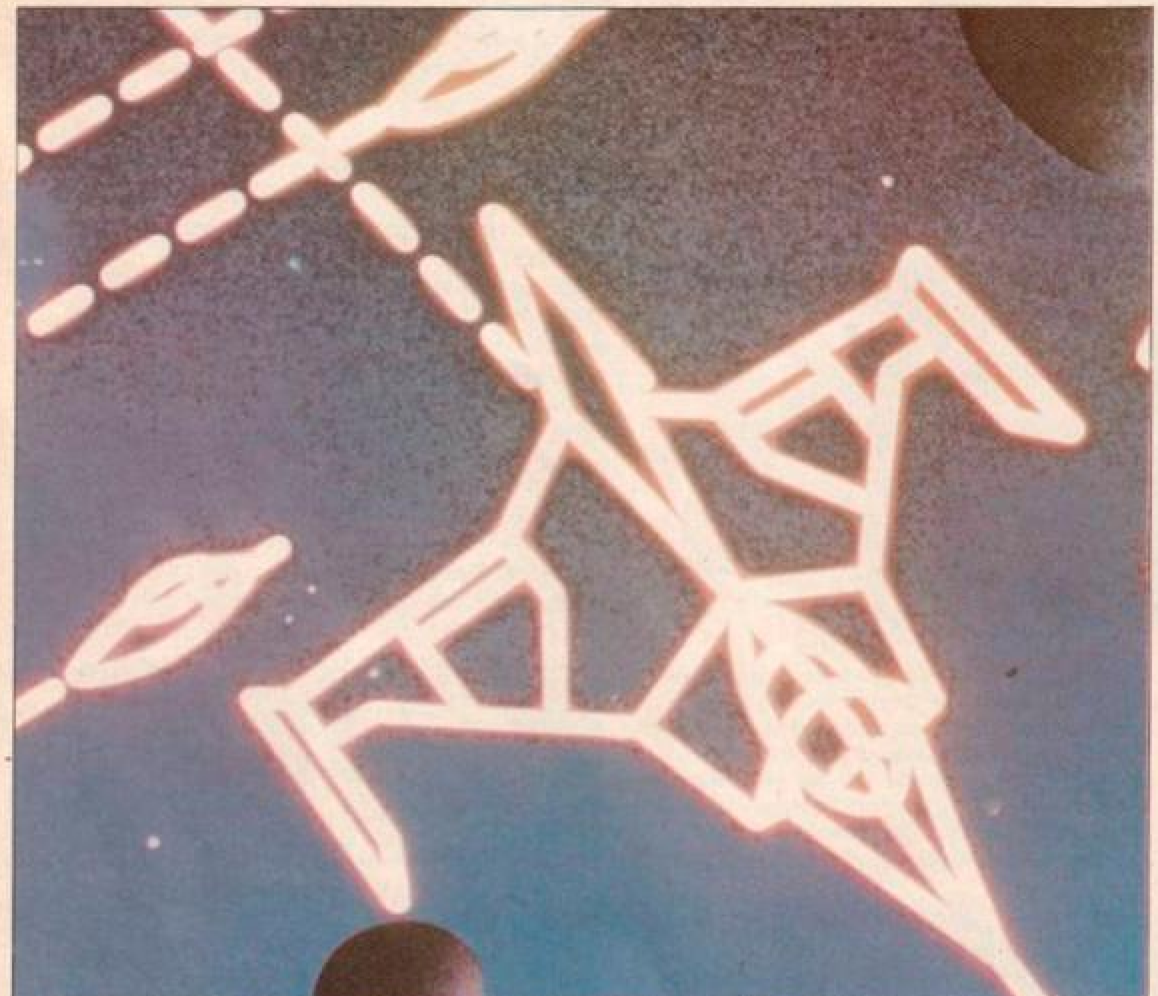




Spaceflight epic







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☆ "The realism of sound and vision is amazing." – CHAMP

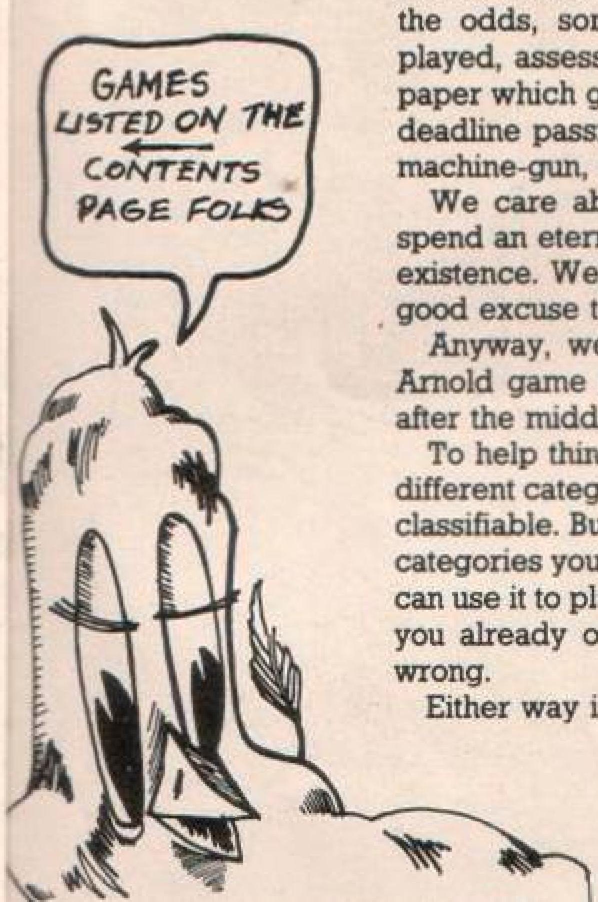
☆ "A Commodore expert was seen openly weeping when he saw the quality of the graphics compared to the Commodore Elite, and with very good reason... fun packed, all action, thinking game... the speed and movement of the 3-D wire frame objects is marvellous." – CRASH

COMMODORE 64 AND AMSTRAD £9.95, SPECTRUM 48K £7.95

Amstrad Action proudly presents...

AMSYCLOPEDIA!

The first complete guide to CPC games software



Picture the scene. 2am on a hot August night. Software editor Bob 'cyclops' Wade sprawled in front of a glowing monitor surrounded by piles of cassettes, coffee mugs and scribbled notes desperately trying to get through the final screen of some inconsequential platform game just in case, against all the odds, something exciting actually does happen. 108 games already played, assessed, written up and lovingly converted into little sticky bits of paper which get lost on the office carpet. Only a few to go, but what with the deadline passing yesterday afternoon, and the editor waiting outside with a machine-gun, can't really call it a day just yet...

We care about you, people, we really care. Can't think why else we'd spend an eternity churning through just about every single Amstrad game in existence. Well, apart from the fact that we like playing games, and it was a good excuse to get software houses to send us piles of review copies.

Anyway, we've ended up reviewing for this guide more or less every Arnold game of any significance ever released, except for those released after the middle of July which are reviewed elsewhere in the magazine.

To help things a bit we've tried to divide the programs into a dozen or so different categories. Pretty impossible, in fact, since some games aren't easily classifiable. But we tried. So to use the guide, all you have to do is turn to the categories you're most interested in and see what's on offer. Alternatively you can use it to play The Angry Game, in which you read our reviews of software you already own, and then send us irate letters about which bits we got wrong.

Either way it's great fun, so happy thumbing.

Blurb Writer *

THE CATEGORIES

ARCADE-ADVENTURES

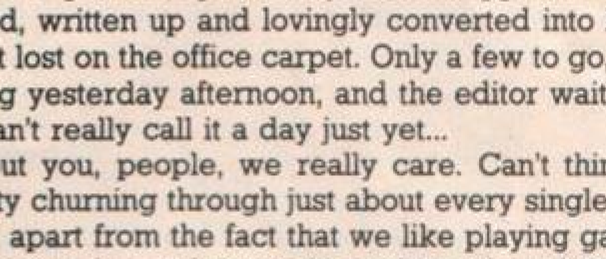
Two key elements here: exploration and puzzle-solving. In other words you spend your time wandering from screen to screen wondering what the heck you're supposed to be doing. Normally the idea is to find certain objects and then work out how to use them.

EXPLORATION GAMES

These are multi-location games which would be arcade-adventures except that to a large extent they lack the puzzle-solving element. You still have to work your way around a playing area, but the challenge will probably be avoiding enemies and discovering safe routes rather than working out how to use objects.

PLATFORM GAMES

You're presented with screens which are rather like obstacle courses. You have to leap from platform to platform avoiding all kinds of bizarre dangers. The skill usually lies in working out the right routes and developing a fine sense of timing. This category only includes platform games which offer you a straight-forward sequence of different screens. You will find other games involving platform action under 'Exploration' and 'Arcade-adventure'.



PILOTING SIMULATORS

We would have called this section 'flight simulators' except it also includes a submarine simulator, and submarines don't normally fly.

ARCADE ACTION

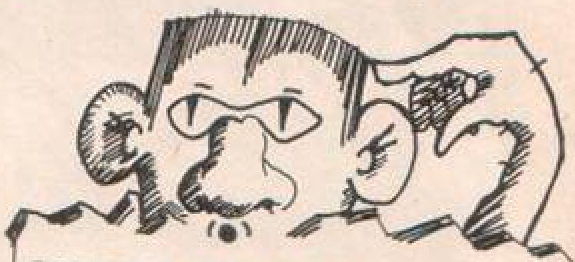
This is basically a cop out category covering any arcade game which doesn't fall under one of the other headings. Most offer harmless, non-violent fun, but the games vary enormously in quality from obsolete one-screen no-things, to highly-entertaining, state-of-the-art specials.

SPORTS SIMULATIONS

Speaks for itself really.

GAME SIMULATIONS

Renditions of non-sporting activities such as chess, bridge and de-frocking ladies.



SHOOT-EM-UPS

Any game where the essence of the action involves blasting away at enemies.

STRATEGY GAMES

A wide variety of programs included here, but normally the player instead of having direct movement control over a character will have to make a series of decisions based on information given him by the program. Most strategy games don't offer exciting graphics and fast action, more an intellectual challenge.

WAR GAMES

A special type of strategy game in which the scenario is, you guessed it, a war.

PUZZLES

If you can't work out what this category covers you'd better steer well clear.

A R C A D E - A D V E N T U R E

PYJAMARAMA

Amsoft/Mikrogen, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This game broke new ground in arcade-adventures and heralded the rise to stardom of Wally Week. The tubby hero has fallen asleep and is having a nightmare so you have to wake him up by getting the key to wind up the alarm clock.

To get the key you have to explore Wally's house and the hordes of giant-size objects and nasties that frequent the beautifully-depicted, colourful rooms, each of which is a separate screen (there are about 30 in all). To get between rooms Wally has to jump at door handles that can be at either end of the room or at the back of it.

He can carry just two objects at a time and every time he walks over another it is swapped for one he already has. To get into certain locations and pick up certain objects he needs to have other objects already so that a progression is built up leading to the key. It is working out precisely which objects are needed to do



what that gives this game its special appeal. However quite a few objects are red herrings.

There are lots of nasties in the rooms and contact with them will drain your snooze energy which is represented by a glass of milk. Some nasties can be neutralised by objects you are carrying while others follow movement patterns and have to be avoided by timing.

There are plenty of humourous touches like a space invaders game, a rocket taking off, a slide down some bannisters and a handy lift to get you about. Two special dangers are a hand that grabs at you from through the floorboards and a boxing glove that pops out of doors at you.

G O O D   N E W S

- Good animation, colourful graphics.
- Excellent combination of arcade action and true adventuring.
- Plenty of humourous touches.
- Solving the puzzles is extremely satisfying.

B A D   N E W S

- There's a lot of red herrings.
- Once you've completed the game there's not too much to go back to.

GRAPHICS	78%
SONICS	51%
GRAB FACTOR	88%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	79%

A R C A D E - A D V E N T U R E

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

CRL, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

The film established a tremendous cult following and now we've got the computer game based on that unique musical. The action revolves around two cute kids called Brad and Janet who are trapped in Dr Frank N. Furter's castle.

You can play either of the characters leaving your companion to be turned to stone by the medusa machine. You have to reassemble the de-medusa machine which is in 15 pieces around the house and get out before the house, a disguised spaceship, takes off.

Many of the rooms in the house are locked and have to be opened with keys. This may let out the strange inhabitants of the place. All the characters from the film are there like Riff-Raff the butler, Eddie the psychopathic biker and Rocky Horror the creation. Some of them may kill you, others steal your clothes leaving you helpless till you get them back, others just have a friendly word with you.

G O O D   N E W S

- Pressure action against the time limit.
- Wacky originality carries over from the film.
- Good rendition of "Let's do the Time Warp."

B A D   N E W S

- Horribly flickery screen (apparently deliberate).
- Random placing of machine pieces leaves a lot to chance.

GRAPHICS	40%
SONICS	77%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	59%
A A RATING	64%



A R C A D E - A D V E N T U R E

KNIGHT LORE

Ultimate, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

The first Ultimate blockbuster on the Amstrad has hopefully set the pattern of things to come in being better than the Spectrum version and rivalling anything on the CBM 64. Brilliant 3D graphics and animation coupled with unique gameplay should put this in anybody's top three games.

The action takes place in a 128-room castle where you take control of Sabreman as he tries to rid himself of a curse that changes his body into that of a werewulf. You have to find certain objects placed around the castle and its grounds and drop them into a wizard's cauldron in the right order until you are rid of the curse.

Each room is a different screen depicted in marvellous, colourful 3D. Many of them are booby-trapped, or have devious puzzles which must be solved before you can get through or collect an object. Solving the puzzles involves manipulating the rooms' contents in a way no other game (except this one's successor *Alien 8*) has managed. For example if there's a ledge you can't quite jump up to, there may be a table in the room that you can push into position to shorten the jump. Alternatively you



A R C A D E - A D V E N T U R E

ALIEN 8

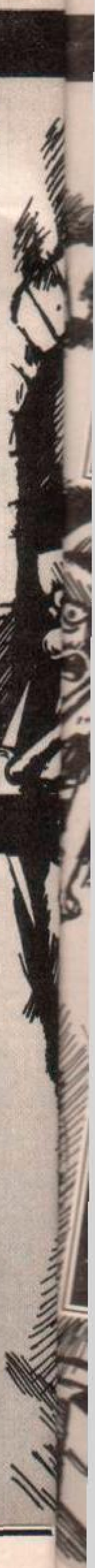
Ultimate, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

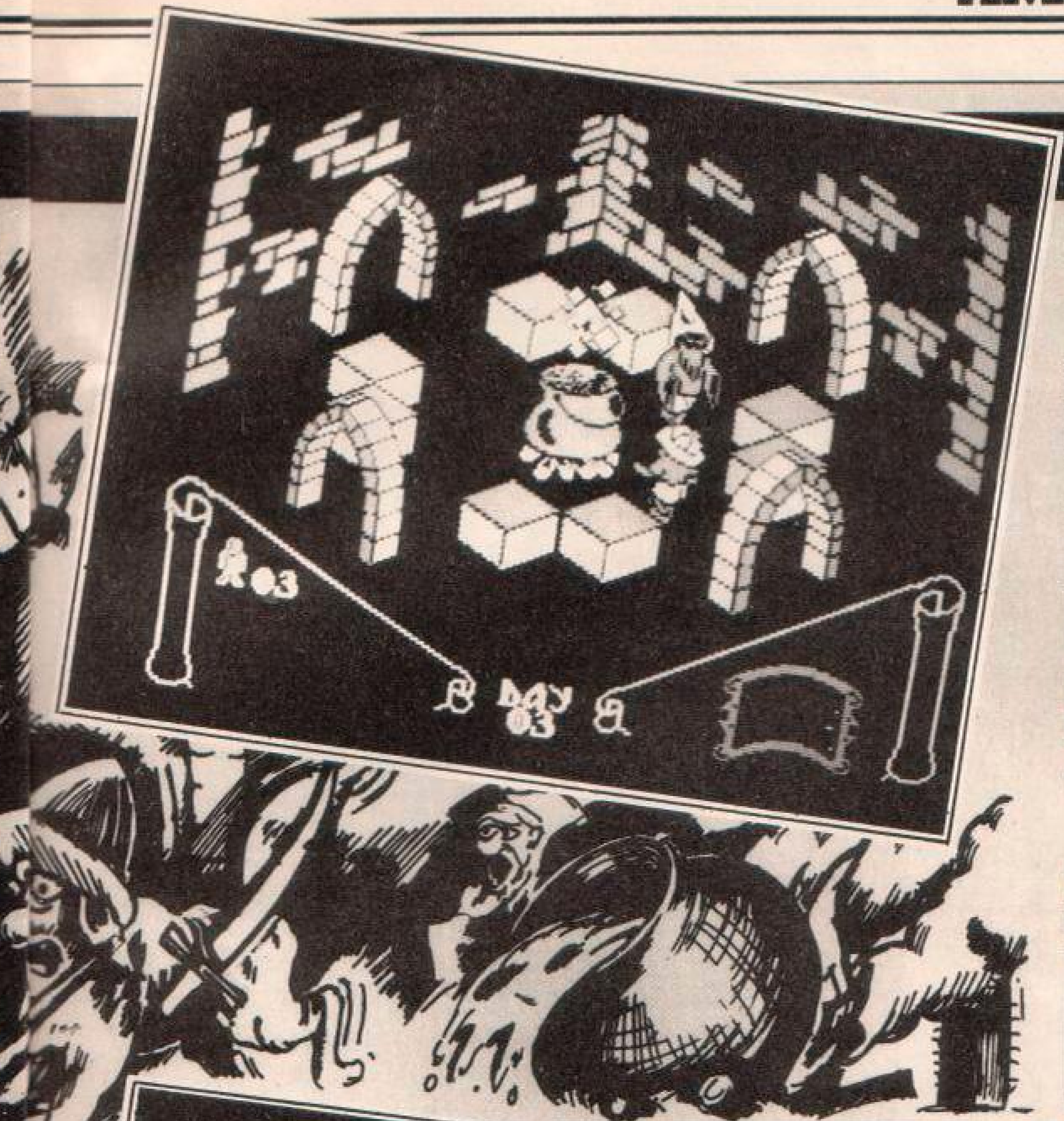
The stunning successor to the mould breaking *Knight Lore* is in the tradition of Ultimate games that give amazing graphics and gameplay and an addictive and original task. The alien 8 of the title is a robot who you have to control in your quest to activate 132 'cryonaughts' aboard a space ship.

The display is in superb 3D, albeit very similar to that of its predecessor, and shows the room in the ship you are in along with any obstacles, traps or scenery. At the bottom is an inventory of what you're carrying, a light year clock time limit and the number of chambers containing cryonaughts that you have activated.

The cryonaughts are found in chambers where a flashing group of stars indicates a type of valve that has to be plugged in. There are 24 such sockets and plenty of valves but your problem is that they can only be got at by working out how to solve a puzzle. The nature of these puzzles are unique to the two Ultimate games, since they depend on the 3D graphics which allow you to move and use objects in a way which no one else has achieved. There are lots of dangers like killer clockwork mice, alien egg shells, pyramid spikes, pads with tubes on them, disappearing floor blocks and mines. These are formed into obstacles, traps and devious pathways that threaten your every move.

There are four types of valve but you can only carry three at once and are fighting aginst a time limit before all the cryonaughts are lost.





could drop one of the objects you're carrying and stand on that. There are of course lots of dangers like spiky mats and balls, guards, ghosts, portcullises, bouncing balls, fire balls and sinking paving stones. There is also the problem that you have a 40-day time limit. Each night you change into a werewulf, and although you can still play the game in this form, some of the enemies are much harder to avoid.

GOOD NEWS

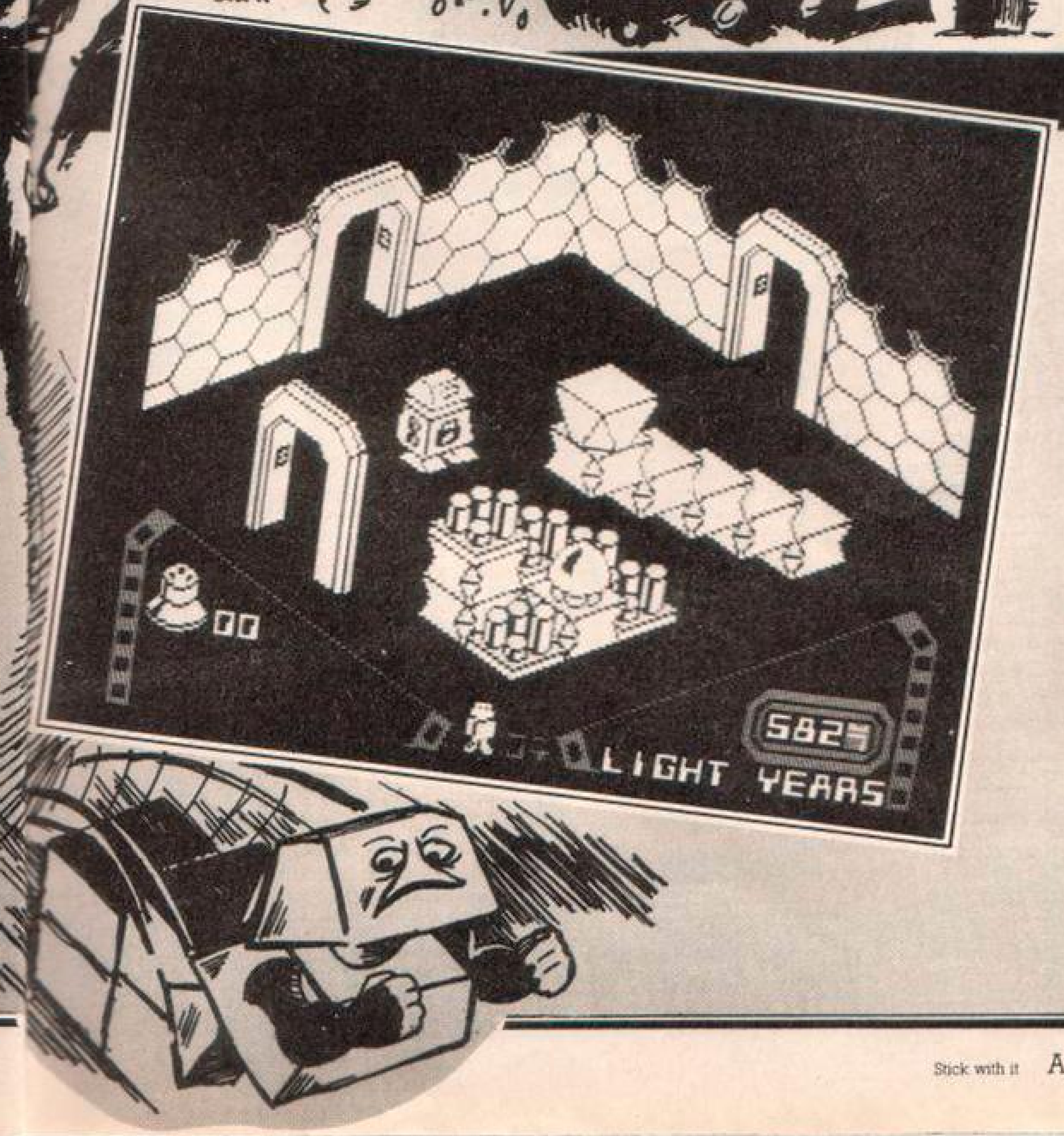
- ▶ Stunningly original concept.
- ▶ Wonderful 3D colour graphics – better than the Speccie and BBC versions.
- ▶ Great gameplay, extremely addictive.
- ▶ Huge playing area – immense long-term challenge.
- ▶ Diabolical puzzles to test mind and joystick.
- ▶ Slick packaging, teasing instructions.

Without doubt one of the best three games available on the Amstrad.

BAD NEWS

▶ The action slows down when more than one thing is moving on screen. ▶ Sound is only a few snatches of tune plus some other noises.

GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	61%
GRAB FACTOR	96%
STAYING POWER	95%
A A RATING	96%



GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Brilliant 3D graphics in great colour combinations.
- ▶ Wonderfully original ideas.
- ▶ Teasing puzzles to test your brain and sense of timing.
- ▶ Horrendously addictive game-play.
- ▶ Arguably an even greater challenge than *Knight Lore*.
- ▶ Slick packaging and instructions.
- ▶ Gets the highest overall rating of any game in this guide.
- ▶ Isn't that enough!

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Movement slowdown when the processor has a lot to cope with.
- ▶ Has many similarities to *Knight Lore*.
- ▶ Occasional unavoidable loss of life can be extremely frustrating.
- ▶ Liable to give you insomnia!

GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	61%
GRAB FACTOR	96%
STAYING POWER	97%
A A RATING	96%

AMSYCLOPEDIA!

A R C A D E - A D V E N T U R E

TECHNICIAN TED Hewson Consultants, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

This cross between an arcade adventure and platform game is set in a chip factory (silicon not potato) where you, as Ted, have to complete 21 tasks. Each task is in a single room and consists of hitting two flashing boxes in sequence.

Ted makes his way around by walking and jumping between the platforms and levels in the rooms. Each room is inhabited by various nasties that follow movement patterns and are fatal to the touch, but there are also non-moving dangers lying in wait.

You are told the first three tasks but after that you have to work them out for yourself. This is made more complex by the fact that completing one task may cause something to happen somewhere else making another task possible. Your job is made even harder by time limits between hitting two boxes for some tasks.

You start at 8.30 am and have to finish by 5.00 pm. The time ticks away at bottom left while a separate gauge decreases every time you die. If this reaches zero or you get to 5.00 pm you are kicked out of the factory into a dustbin.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Good graphics and sound.
▶ 21 tough tasks to complete will take some time.
▶ Too easy to have "just one more go."

B A D N E W S

▶ Frustrating if you get stuck on one task for too long.
▶ Unoriginal game -*Jet Set Willy* lookalike.

GRAPHICS	74%
SONICS	63%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	82%

E X P L O R A T I O N

ROLAND IN TIME

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The first real blockbuster game on the Amstrad starring Amsoft's favourite hero in a ten level platform/exploration game with 53 screens. You have to collect the crystals from all the screens which are jam-packed with hazards and pitfalls.

You appear at each of the levels from a phone box and this is where you have to return to take yourself to another level. Fortunately you are also returned to the box every time you die so that you can easily switch levels if you're finding one particularly hard going.

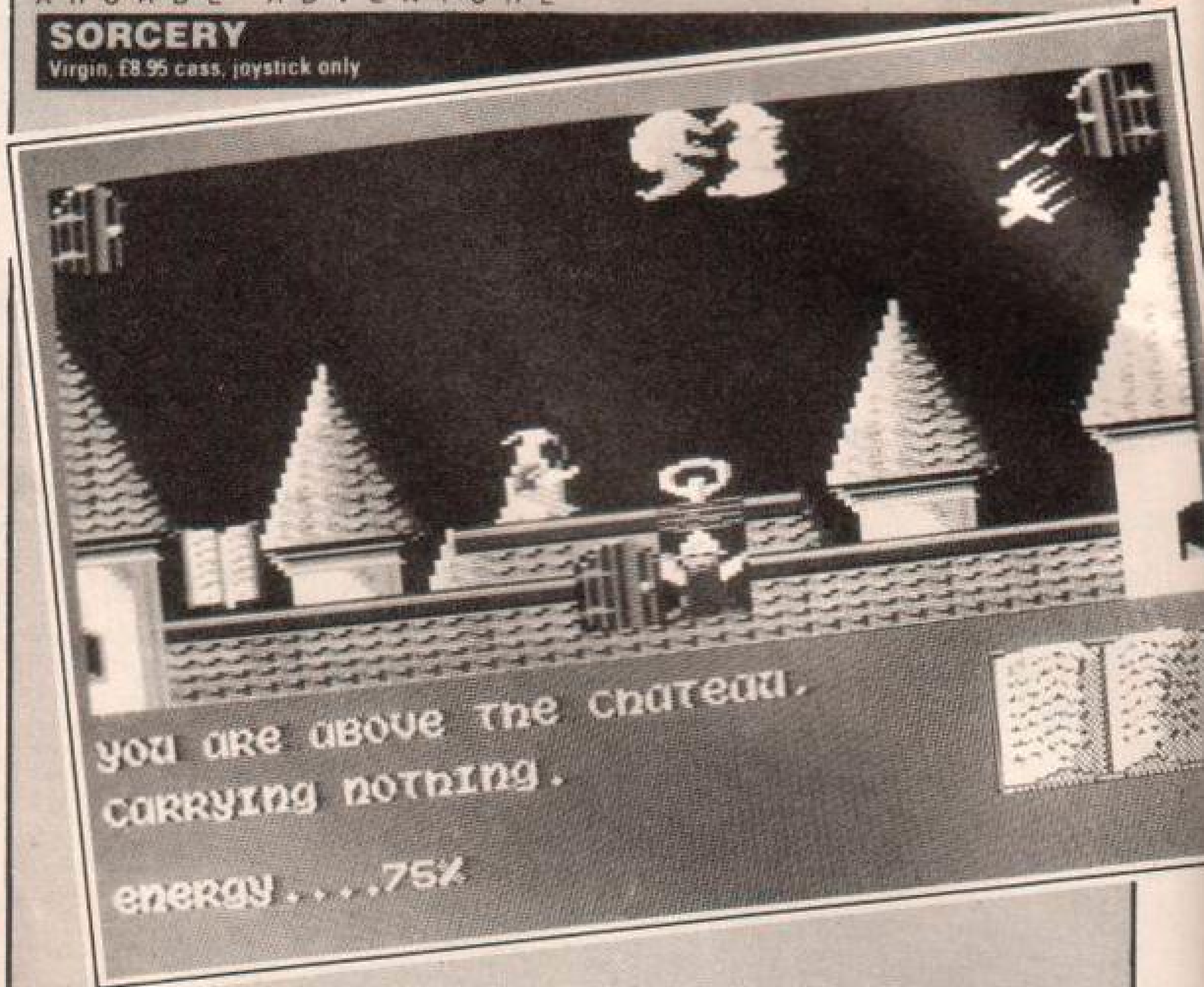
The scenes vary enormously and each level is a different timezone with its own special features. Throughout you will encounter deadly green heads and fatal falls but there are masses of enemies that follow movement patterns and should be avoided at all costs.

The scenery is not always to be trusted as floors will melt away under you or drag you along or even take you up and down. The scenery may even kill you since there are some deadly plants around. You rely solely on your ability to walk and jump with accurate timing.

A R C A D E - A D V E N T U R E

SORCERY

Virgin, £8.95 cass, joystick only



This is one of the classic games so far on the Amstrad. It's miles better than the CBM 64 version and provides wonderfully colourful entertainment.

You control a sorceror who has to release eight fellow sorcerors from traps around and inside a castle and chateau. Each of the eight sorcerors is released by a particular object which you can pick up, but both they and the objects can be located in tough places to get to. The screens are populated by a nasty variety of monsters like ghosts, monks, eyeballs and boars heads. These can be killed off using shooting stars or a sack of spells or particular weapons like swords and axes which may only kill one type of beast.

There are three things that may end your game: the time limit running out, running out of energy or drowning in a pool of water. The time limit is a book that gradually disappears pixel by pixel while your energy is sapped by monsters and can be replaced by sitting your sorceror on a cauldron.

There are 40 screens and you get around them by flying in any direction. You get between screens by flying into doors that creak open to let you through.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Excellent, colourful, well-animated graphics.
▶ A hard challenge needing plenty of skill.
▶ Pleasing music and sound effects.
▶ Easy control.
▶ Addictive gameplay.
▶
magic.

B A D N E W S

▶ I had to stop playing it to write the review.

GRAPHICS	91%
SONICS	70%
GRAB FACTOR	93%
STAYING POWER	89%
A A RATING	90%

G O O D N E W S

▶ Excellently varied graphics.
▶ Lots to explore.
▶ Maddeningly addictive.
▶ A very challenging game, will take a long time to solve.
▶ Pleasant rendition of Dr Who signature tune

B A D N E W S

▶ The music during play is rather slow

GRAPHICS	81%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	82%
A A RATING	82%

E X P L O R A T I O N

ROLAND ON THE ROPES

Amsoft/Indescomp, £8.95 cass or free with 464, joystick or keys

You-know-who is lost at the bottom of a maze-like tomb of 31 levels and has to find his way to the top, collecting treasures as he goes. You make your way around on ropes which hang from the ceiling but there are lots of dead ends and hazardous areas. Only a small part of the maze is visible on screen, the picture scrolling (jerkily!) as you move around. The tomb has dangers which will sap your strength. Ghosts can move through walls while mummies, skeletons and vampires can be disposed of with your trusty gun (if you've got the bullets). Rats scurry along the floor and have to

 Giving its opinions clearly

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The list above doesn't include **everything** for the CPCs – there's an ever increasing list of disc-based software, and latest show introductions, for instance. So if you are hunting for an old classic, or something scorchingly new, or simply obscure . . . do try us! Note that a single asterisk (*) indicates new or imminent release.

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be jumped, while chameleons run up tunnel walls and you lose strength if you touch them.

You can replenish your strength with elixir-of-life bottles and massive bonuses are gained if you succeed in escaping into the night air.

GOOD NEWS

- Different maze layouts and object positions.
- Colourful graphics.
- A tough exploring challenge.

BAD NEWS

- Horribly glitchy scrolling.
- Control is annoyingly difficult.

GRAPHICS	47%
SONICS	61%
GRAB FACTOR	63%
STAYING POWER	62%
AA RATING	58%

EXPLORATION

SURVIVOR

Anirog, £6.95 cass, joystick only

You are trapped in a seven-level mansion with 144 rooms on each level that are packed with monsters and treasure. Each level has a different surround to the rooms and progressively more dangerous monsters.

On each level you have to get the porcupine bombs so as to move to the next level and you are directed to these by signposts in some of the rooms. The rooms contain diamond rings, coins, money notes and magic symbols.

There are four types of monsters each with different characteristics but they will all drain your energy if they bump into you or can be dispatched with your limited supply of bullets. These two can be replaced by finding the bottles or guns respectively.

The bombs are randomly spread around and can be used against monsters when they will send out a spray of bullets to destroy anything in the vicinity.

GOOD NEWS

- All action as you charge around the rooms.
- Good music to accompany the game.
- Very large playing area.

BAD NEWS

- Repetitive rooms and task.
- Monsters can appear right on top of you.

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	75%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	72%
AA RATING	66%

EXPLORATION

DEATH PIT

Durell, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

The pit in question is a maze of ladders and tunnels in which all manner of nasties lurk and from where must be rescued 20 gold bars and a gem. You are the intrepid explorer who has to bring the treasures back to his tent above ground.

You are equipped with a spade for killing monsters, oxygen for breathing when in flooded sections of cave and batteries for powering your pit lamp. The caves cover 80 screens and walking off one screen flicks you to the next (sometimes straight into the path of an enemy). The monsters come in two main types. Slime and spiders drop from patches in the ceiling and along with fire breathing dragons cannot be killed. Scorpions, spiders and bats travel along the tunnels and ladders but can be dispatched with your spade. You



are most vulnerable when using ladders since you are defenceless unless you have time to stop and use your spade.

Gold and the gem can be picked up in place of spare equipment but running out of oxygen or battery power will lose you a life so spares should be kept handy. The game has a time limit and if the gem isn't recovered soon enough the game ends.

GOOD NEWS

- Large playing area.
- Tough task calling for mapping and fast action.

BAD NEWS

- Incredibly frustrating deaths – the flick-screen feature makes it impossible to avoid blundering into monsters.

GRAPHICS	65%
SONICS	38%
GRAB FACTOR	42%
STAYING POWER	63%
AA RATING	59%

EXPLORATION

FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Fancy a sightseeing tour around your own body? Well here's your chance with another exploration game based on a famous film. Your task is to reassemble in the brain the eight pieces of your submarine. You start in the mouth next to the first piece. You can swim around the body armed with a laser with which to defend you against the many dangers. Your position is indicated by a dot on a body outline and each screen is labelled with the appropriate area like lungs, arteries and so on. If you succeed in getting the sub together it shrinks and you have to find a way out.

Infections are a major problem since these can kill the host body and consequently you, so when they appear on the body map you have to get to them and wipe them out. Green viruses and some nasty little blue cells are also deadly but cholesterol merely blocks your path and has to be lasered away. Growths can also block your way but collecting a white blood cell and releasing it will kill the growth.

Your energy is sapped the whole time and the only way to replace it is to collect red blood cells. Failure to do so will result in you turning invisible and you won't last long.

GOOD NEWS

- Very original game scenario.
- A difficult task with plenty of playing area.

BAD NEWS

- Difficult control.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	57%
GRAB FACTOR	66%
STAYING POWER	68%
AA RATING	67%

EXPLORATION

ROLAND IN SPACE

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The follow up to the highly successful *Roland in Time* with the little fellow reunited with his phone box in a quest for 158 pieces of a super weapon on seven different planets. There aren't any flick screens with exits either, just large scrolling playing areas packed with pieces and nasties.

You can start at any of the seven planets and will emerge from your phone booth in the middle of the playing area. As in *Time* there are lots of different scenes with colourful, varied graphics in which hazards move in patterns to try and catch you out.

If you are unfortunate enough to run into a deadly obstacle you sprout wings and flutter back to your box where you can move to another planet if you wish. The scenery can play many tricks with disappearing floors, conveyor belts, lifts, slides and water.

If you have a speech synthesiser you'll hear Roly saying things like "Don't panic", "That's another fine mess you've got me into" and "Go for it". The speech is a little robot-like but still recognisable.

GOOD NEWS

- Colourful and varied graphics.
- Will take a long while to complete.
- Speech synthesis has some good lines.
- You keep going back for more.



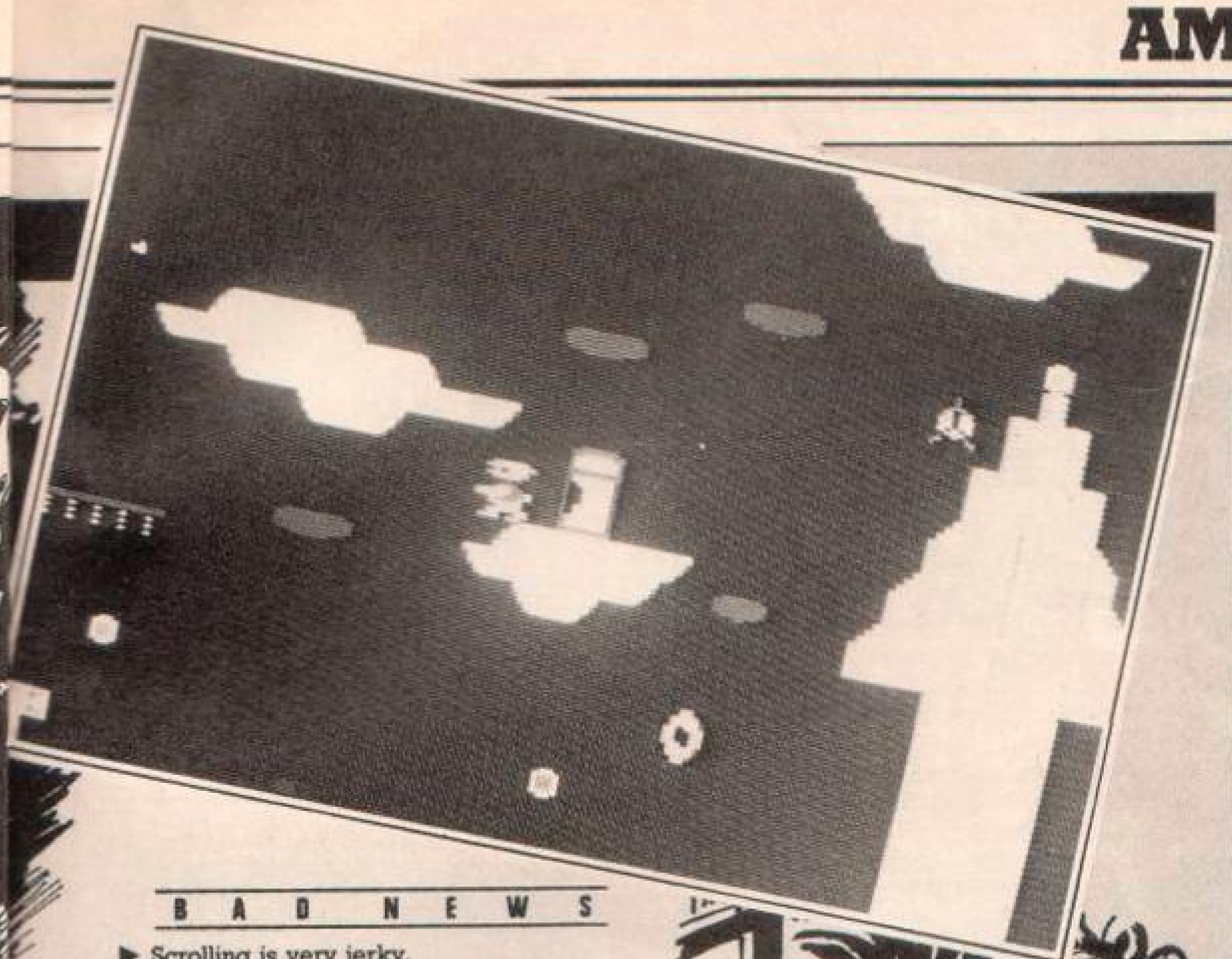
EXPLORATION

ANDROID ONE

Vortex, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

You've got to take charge of an android and destroy a nuclear reactor before the reactor blows up and destroys the world. You've got 14 screens to get through packed with mutants and thick brick walls.

The 14 screens are connected horizontally and as you reach the edge of one, the picture flicks to the next. However the mutants can also travel between screens through the holes you have to make in brick walls to clear your own passage. The mutants come in four varieties, all with different movement charac-



B A D N E W S

- ▶ Scrolling is very jerky.
- ▶ Music during play is rather monotonous.

GRAPHICS	80%
SONICS	65%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	81%



teristics and one of which you can't destroy.

A transporter gets you to the second half of the run and once you've destroyed the reactor you have to get back to the starting screen before the time limit runs out. A direction indicator shows you where you are going (not much use) and how many of your five lives are left.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Lots of tough and varied screens.
- ▶ Addictive since you're always trying to see the next bit of the run.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Firing is intermittent so it's very easy to miss things.
- ▶ Android is too sensitive to control easily.
- ▶ Sound effects will give you a migraine.

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	16%
GRAB FACTOR	67%
STAYING POWER	65%
A A RATING	65%

S H O O T - E M - U P

DARK STAR
Design Design, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Your ambitious aim is to liberate the galaxy from the Evil Lord. But you'll have to do it one planet at a time and with a possible 256 planets you've got a tough task. You are in command of a lone ship, the LIAR.

You begin in one of the 16x16 galaxy's squares. Depending on the skill level your task is to wipe out the enemies military centres, of which there can be as many as 51. You start in space with stars flashing by you and can encounter a planet, enemy ship, energy concentrations or hyperspace tunnel.

Flying into a planet takes you down to the surface where you have to fly past the defence towers and through holes in the force shield to the base and destroy it. Once all the bases on a planet are destroyed you have liberated it and can escape.

You can also find spaceports and energy dumps on the surface although these are also well defended. Your energy suffers from enemy hits or collisions with towers and force fields. Towers collapse when blasted with your laser while ships disappear into space dust.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Brilliantly smooth, 3D vector graphics.
- ▶ Fast, exciting movement.
- ▶ Stacks of game options (funny too!).

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Attacking bases may get a bit samey.

GRAPHICS	89%
SONICS	43%
GRAB FACTOR	87%
STAYING POWER	82%
A A RATING	84%

S H O O T - E M - U P

THE GALACTIC PLAGUE
Amsoft/Indescomp, £8.95 cass or free with 464, joystick or keys

This variant of *Galaxians* features 10 waves of aliens descending the screen towards your astro fighter. Each wave has its individual characteristic although the several types of aliens repeat their patterns when they appear.

Your fighter only moves left, right and fires and is very vulnerable. You get three fighters at the start of each new wave and you really need them.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ You'll feel right at home.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ The fighter reacts too sluggishly.
- ▶ There is little variation.
- ▶ It's got a really dated feel.

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	28%
GRAB FACTOR	42%
STAYING POWER	26%
A A RATING	29%

S H O O T - E M - U P

CHOPPER SQUAD
Interceptor Micro's, £6.00 cass, joystick or keys

Based on *Jetpac* this game has you building a plane instead of a rocket – and it doesn't even need fuelling. You control a chopper that has to pick up pieces of a plane and take them to the bottom right of the screen.

The pieces drop in from the top of the screen and may land on one of three platforms or the ground. There are four aliens trying to stop you by ramming you and as you progress to the next plane they change shape and start to home in on you.

You have a rapid fire laser to dispose of the aliens and the bullets will come out in great bursts if you're moving up or down. The chopper can land on the three platforms but sitting still is not advised.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Frantic action.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Slow movement is frustrating.
- ▶ Graphics and sound are poor.
- ▶ Unoriginal.

GRAPHICS	30%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	42%
STAYING POWER	31%
A A RATING	34%

S H O O T - E M - U P

AHHH!!!
CRL, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

Old timers will remember the days of 'left, right and fire' and this is a version of those early favourites. You are the lone pilot battling waves of aliens deep in space as they head for your home planet.

The aliens come in 18 waves and each one I've seen follows a different movement pattern at quite a fast pace. Your laser base moves left

and right at the bottom of the screen and is equipped with a rapid fire laser and a shield to protect you from the enemy's fire.

After every three waves you have to dock with a supply vessel to replenish your fuel. This is consumed by movement and using your shield. Running out of fuel or being hit by the aliens will destroy one of your three bases. Your other major problem is that if the laser overheats it will stop firing until it cools down.

GOOD NEWS

- Fast, difficult action.
- Plenty of different waves.
- Won't tax the brain.

BAD NEWS

- Dated game concept.
- Flickery graphics when aliens overlap.
- Can become frustrating.
- Attack patterns fairly uninteresting.
- Space bar has to be held down to keep shield up.
- Won't tax the brain.

GRAPHICS	40%
SONICS	34%
GRAB FACTOR	48%
STAYING POWER	39%
A A RATING	44%

SHOOT-EM-UP

ASTRO ATTACK

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Set on a grid you have to fight off the marauding Rigonites before your time runs out and you are destroyed by the Matter Zapper.

You start in the middle of the grid in which some gaps are blocked by walls and others by force fields deadly to your ship. Also on the grid are enemy craft which initially just move around trying to ram you but on later levels can shoot at you.

You have a laser with which to blast these ships when they are in the same column or line as you. You can move around and once you go in one direction you continue until you hit something or move again.

There are satellites that can be picked up for bonus points and an extra life at 10,000 points.

GOOD NEWS

- 40 levels of difficulty.
- Fast reflex action.

BAD NEWS

- No real variety in screens.
- Simple graphics and sound.
- Little lasting interest in doing the same old thing.

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	36%
GRAB FACTOR	45%
STAYING POWER	35%
A A RATING	38%

STRATEGY

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Hewson Consultants, £7.95 cass, keys only

This program will give you a taste of just how tough it is to be an air traffic controller, taking you from the easiest of tasks to major emergencies. The action can take place at either Heathrow, London or Schiphol, Amsterdam where you can take on seven exercises of increasing difficulty to land aircraft safely and quickly.

The display is a radar scan of the area surrounding the airport with a runway approach path down which you must guide the letter-coded aircraft, marked with their altitude and a short trail behind them.

You have to handle all sizes of craft from light aircraft to Concorde and determine their height, speed and direction. This is no easy task since you have to communicate with up to twenty aircraft at once. You also face restrictions in harder levels of the game on airspace, spacing of landings, emergency traffic and even the ominous ADDITIONAL problem.

The game can be speeded up or slowed down to suit your skill but it is always hectic. There is a handy readout to show you your progress and if you're really under pressure a pause mode is available. Shame you can't do that on the real thing!

GOOD NEWS

- Plenty of problems and levels to get you started and to provide a challenge.
- Easy to familiarize key controls.
- Two different airports.
- Clear and detailed instructions.
- Excellent game options.

BAD NEWS

- Limited graphics and sound.
- Won't suit fast action games players.

GRAPHICS	22%
SONICS	20%
GRAB FACTOR	52%
STAYING POWER	73%
A A RATING	68%

STRATEGY

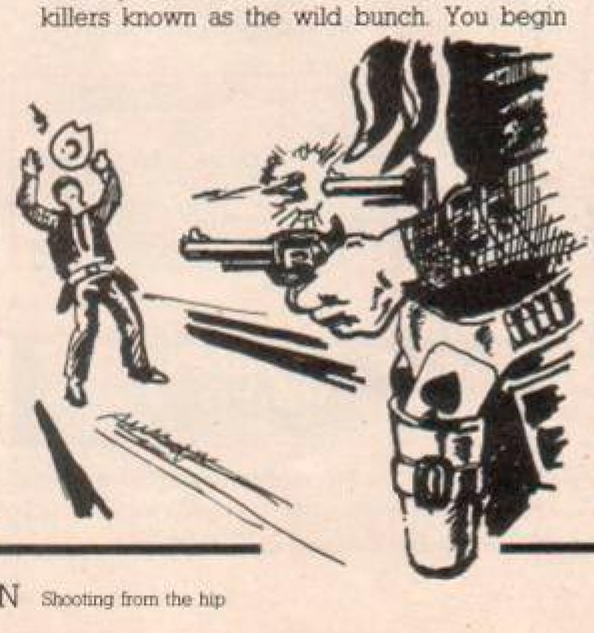
THE WILD BUNCH

Firebird, £2.50 cass, keys only

In the mean 'ole wild west you have been wrongly branded a murderer. To clear your name you have to track down five ruthless killers known as the wild bunch. You begin your quest in one of five towns with only a description of the real murderer and your Colt .45.

There are two main phases to the game, in the towns and travelling between them. In towns you can play poker to get money with which you can buy equipment and provisions at the store. You can go to the sheriff's office to get information on the wild bunch or the telegraph to check on the Pinkerton agent who's pursuing you.

Eventually you want to recognise and have gunfights with the five members of the bunch. They will be found in different towns so you have to get between them. On each journey you'll encounter many dangers which will sap your strength and perhaps kill you unless you are prepared for them.



GOOD NEWS

- A tough challenge which is extremely hard to complete.
- An original mixture of trading, adventuring and good fortune.

BAD NEWS

- You spend most of your time playing poker.
- The Pinkerton agent moves totally unpredictably.

GRAPHICS	25%
SONICS	15%
GRAB FACTOR	64%
STAYING POWER	67%
A A RATING	70%

PILOTING-SIMULATOR

FIGHTER PILOT

Digital Integration, £8.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

You're in full control of an F15 Eagle fighter and under your command it will take-off, land, shoot it out with an enemy aircraft and even cope with weather hazards - if YOU can.

There are three types of mission – landing practice, flight training and combat. Combat can also be done in practice mode and on all missions the additional hazards of blind landing, crosswinds and turbulence can be introduced.

The display is of the view through the cockpit with an instrument panel below. On this is indicated all the information on your speed, height radar, computer, thrust, fuel, roll, pitch, flaps, undercarriage and ammunition. The sky is blue, the ground is green and the only other things that will appear are enemy aircraft and the four runways that are positioned on the map.

Flying, fighting and landing take some practice but once you've got the hang of it the large wraparound flying area gives you plenty of airspace to fly in.

GOOD NEWS

- Good instrumentation.
- Rapid display update.
- Combat mode where you can shoot enemy planes.

 Shooting from the hip

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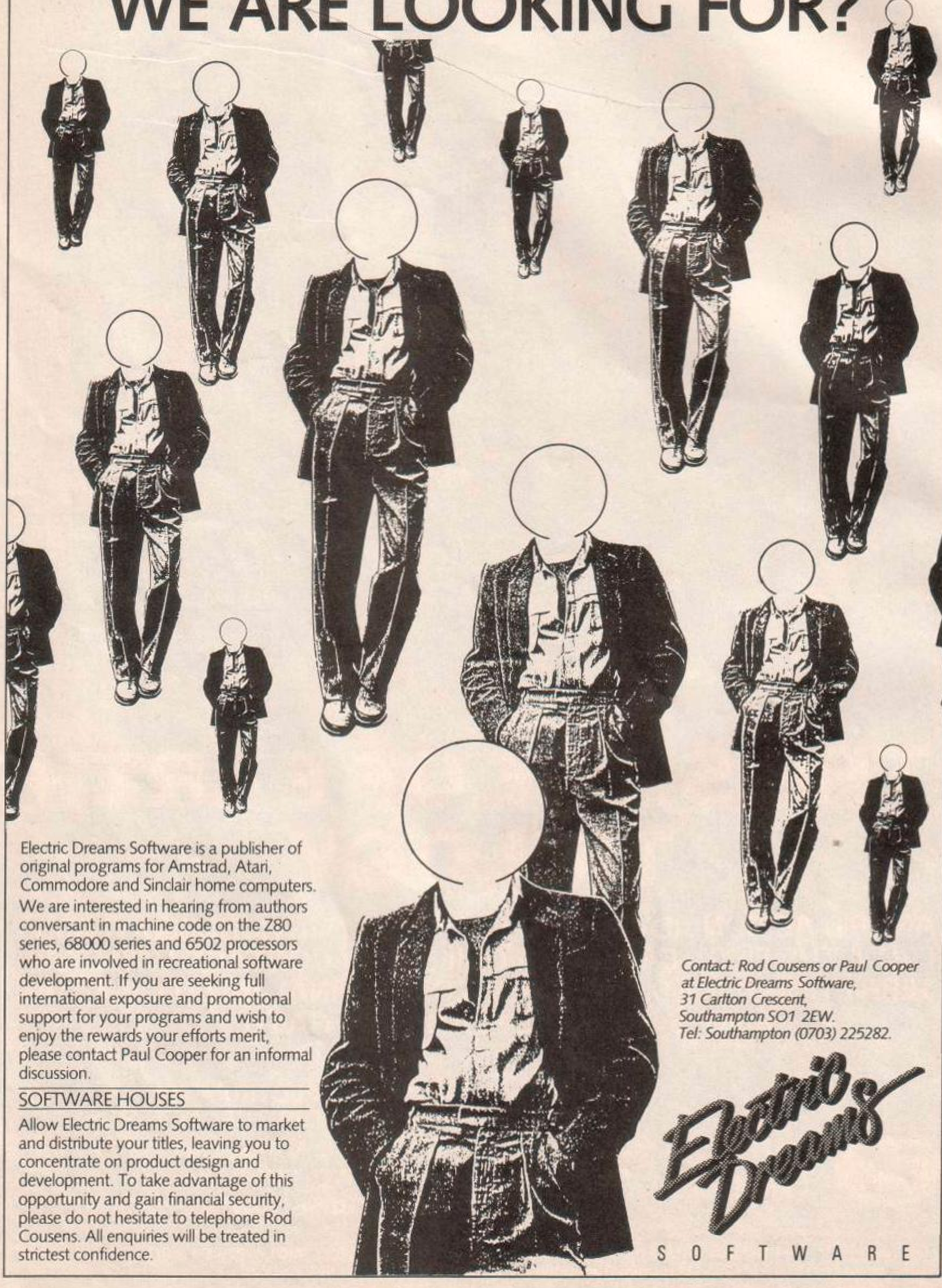
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Electric Dreams

S O F T W A R E

BAD NEWS

- No landmarks.
- May pale when you've sussed the combat flying.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	51%
GRAB FACTOR	50%
STAYING POWER	72%
AA RATING	65%

PLATFORM - GAME

ROLAND IN THE CAVES

Amsoft/Indescomp, £8.95 cass, keys only

The trusty hero of many an Amsoft game has been transformed into a flea in a version of the game *Bugaboo*. He is trapped in a cave from which he has to escape - many times.

The cave is filled with small platforms leading up to the top of the cave where there are two exits. Your flea can jump left or right with the strength being determined by how when the jump button is released. The screen scrolls when you jump to reveal more of the subterranean wonderland.

There are two dangers within the cave: a pterodactyl that flys after you and killer plants that appear on platforms waiting for a careless leap. If you ever get out you just slip back in and have to try again with yet more vicious vegetation.

GOOD NEWS

- Colourful cave graphics.
- Novel gameplay due to the jumping control.

BAD NEWS

- Very frustrating gameplay – you often die with zero points.
- Jumpy graphics and scrolling.
- No variation in task.

GRAPHICS	47%
SONICS	42%
GRAB FACTOR	56%
STAYING POWER	44%
AA RATING	49%

PLATFORM - GAME

JET-BOOT JACK

Amsoft/English, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

JBJ is collecting musical notes from the record processing plant in a hip and groovy platform game variant. There are ten screens on which you have to gather all the notes. However, this plant is strangely affected by craggy ceilings, monsters and deadly machinery.

You can move around on Jack's jet-boots but if you bump into anything other than a note or a vinyl pod on the ceiling you lose a life. Each screen has several levels and you can get between them using lifts and sliders but these can also prove fatal if they aren't stationary when you get on them.

To avoid obstacles you can duck under ceilings and monsters or jump on the ceiling above a monster to knock it off. The vinyl pods replenish your energy which is continually being used up. Collecting all the notes takes you to the next screen.

You can vary the number of monsters – which come in five different varieties – and after completing a screen you can bypass it in later games.

GOOD NEWS

- Slick graphics and sound.
- Challenging gameplay and hard screens.
- You'll keep wanting one more go to crack a screen.

BAD NEWS

- Rapid deaths through tiny mistakes becomes annoying.

GRAPHICS	71%
SONICS	70%
GRAB FACTOR	74%
STAYING POWER	68%
AA RATING	70%

STRATEGY

FOOTBALL MANAGER

Addictive Games, £7.95 cass, keys only

This simulation of the job of a football manager is one of the oldest and best-selling computer games around and its conversion has not dimmed its appeal. Your task is to lead your club through the four divisions and the FA Cup to fame and fortune (or get sacked).

You start in the fourth division and each season play a game against the other 15 teams in your division. You also take part in the FA Cup with the games interspersed with the league schedule. The main part of the game is the preparation and playing of the matches.

You have a squad of players who play in defence, midfield or attack and have ratings for their skill and energy. Having picked a suitable team from these you are shown highlights of the match in 3D with stick-man players and a very enthusiastic crowd.

Once the results are in a table is formed and you then do the other jobs required of you as manager. You'll be presented with the week's finances, including a possible loan, the chance to buy and sell players, and game options for saving, changing skill level and seeing your rating.

GOOD NEWS

- Incredibly absorbing for all football fans.
- Real tension during matches.
- Save game option.
- Adaptable skill level.

BAD NEWS

- May get boring for non-fanatics.
- The graphics and sound are disappointing.

GRAPHICS	34%
SONICS	14%
GRAB FACTOR	66%
STAYING POWER	74%
AA RATING	69%

SHOOT - EM - UP

DEFEND OR DIE

Alligata, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Defender is an all time classic arcade game and this accurate conversion has all the features of the original. Your job is to defend 10 scientists on the surface of an alien planet from the landers that will turn them into mutants.

The screen is composed of the planet surface below with a scanner showing the whole w paround play area above it. Your ship thrusts left or right and also moves up and down firing bursts of laser that are deadly if your trigger finger is fast enough. There are six types of alien, all with different characteristics but all deadly to you.



Landers try to steal your scientists and mutate them, and if you lose all of them your planet blows up and things get much tougher. Swarmers are fast and small and like baiters will rapidly home in on your ship. Bombs are also shot at you and bombers will leave stationary bombs for you to run into.

You have some advantages in being able to hyperspace to somewhere else when in trouble or drop a smart bomb to kill everything on screen.

GOOD NEWS

- Tough action against dedicated opponents.
- Accurate conversion of the old classic.
- Hours of blasting practice guaranteed.

BAD NEWS

- Actual screen movement is sluggish and acceleration isn't easy to handle.

GRAPHICS	73%
SONICS	48%
GRAB FACTOR	74%
STAYING POWER	72%
AA RATING	73%

SPORT - SIMULATION

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Amsoft/Argus Press, £8.95 cass, keys only

US football has taken off in Britain and this computer version lets you play your own matches against the computer or another player. The game features all the rules and action from the real thing but is acted out by two stick-man teams on screen.

The game is split into four quarters of 15 minutes and the object is to take the ball into the opposition's 'endzone' for a touchdown. This can be converted for another point and a field goal will score three points. The offence has four passing plays, four running plays and three types of kick while the defence can choose from one of four defensive plays.

The offence has to make ten yards in four 'downs' through these moves while the de-



fence tries to block them. Some plays will get little yardage or even give the ball over to the other side while others may move the ball a long way.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ A good simulation needing accurate tactical thinking.
- ▶ Fascinating statistics.
- ▶ Great instructions with background detail.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ May not appeal to non-fans.
- ▶ Stick-man characters are disappointing.

GRAPHICS	23%
SONICS	12%
GRAB FACTOR	74%
STAYING POWER	71%
A A RATING	70%

DALEY THOMPSON'S DECATHLON

Ocean, £8.95 cass, joystick only

This game is likely to break as many Amstrad joysticks as decathlon games have on other micros. It stars DT in all his ten events – 100 metres, long jump, shot put, high jump, 400 metres, 110 metres hurdles, discus, pole vault, javelin and 1500 metres.

On each event you build up Daley's speed by waggling the joystick or hammering keys. In throwing events you also have to determine the throwing or take-off angle using the fire button.

Daley's running action is a little slow but well animated against a colourful background. You have to make a qualifying time or distance for each event otherwise you lose one of your three lives. If you qualify the crowd roars as you celebrate and if yours is one of the top three scores it goes in the record book.

Each event brings you points and if you get through all ten events you can increase this enormously by going through them a second time or for as long as you can keep qualifying.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Colourful graphics and animation.
- ▶ Sweaty arm-building action.
- ▶ Theme tune and occasional ditties.
- ▶ A lot better than the Commodore 64 and Spectrum versions!

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Only one athlete on screen - you can't compete against an opponent.
- ▶ 400 and 1500 metres are done faster than real time.
- ▶ Your joystick may not last long!

GRAPHICS	86%
SONICS	66%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	78%
A A RATING	81%



S P O R T - S I M U L A T I O N

ALEX HIGGINS' WORLD POOL

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This version of pool is the one where there are two sets of seven balls and a black eight ball.

All the balls are racked in a triangle at one end of the table with the cue ball in the "D" at the opposite end. You first have to place the cue ball then set its direction with a cursor. The strength and spin on shots is determined by gauges which you can alter to produce top, back, left and right spin.

One set of balls is striped while the other has a spot. The two sets are of seven different colours but if you're using a green screen they can be numbered.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Plays a reasonable game of pool.
- ▶ Good two-player entertainment.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Ball movement is slow and jerky.
- ▶ Balls are hexagon shaped making angles difficult to judge.

GRAPHICS	54%
SONICS	54%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	48%
A A RATING	51%

S T R A T E G Y

DETECTIVE

Amsoft/Argus Press, £8.95 cass, keys only

This is based on the board game Cluedo and involves you in a similar murder hunt where you have to track down the murderer, the room where it happened, the weapon and the motive.

The action takes place in nine rooms with up to six players and nine characters, weapons and motives. Each player is given a code number for each of the nine sets of information which allows them to hide their discoveries from the other players.

When it is your turn a die is thrown and you can move that number of rooms or less. Once in the room chosen you can enter your code numbers for the three parts of the murder and are given a Y or N depending on whether you're right or wrong. On the second level you're only given the Y's. All this makes it like the game Mastermind (board not TV) and leaves nearly everything to chance rather than skill.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Could be fun for several players.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Virtually no skill involved.
- ▶ No interest as a one player game.

GRAPHICS	22%
SONICS	16%
GRAB FACTOR	46%
STAYING POWER	33%
A A RATING	38%

S P O R T - S I M U L A T I O N

STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER

CDS, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

Fast action is really the name of this game with balls zipping everywhere right from the break. You can shoot a one or two player game, neither against the computer, and have 10 or 15 reds.

The table is laid out as normal and below it are the power and spin controls. Power is set on a gauge while spin is set by moving a cross around a ball. The balls have to be potted in the normal manner and you are allowed to force an opponent to play again after a foul shot.

The colours can be numbered if you have a green screen and if you get a high enough break you can enter it in the high score table.

G O O D N E W S

- ▶ Smooth, fast moving balls.
- ▶ Accurate shots are possible.
- ▶ High break table.
- ▶ Challenging two player competition.

B A D N E W S

- ▶ Baize is too light green - hard on the eyes.

GRAPHICS	76%
SONICS	25%
GRAB FACTOR	64%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	68%

S P O R T - S I M U L A T I O N

AMSGOLF

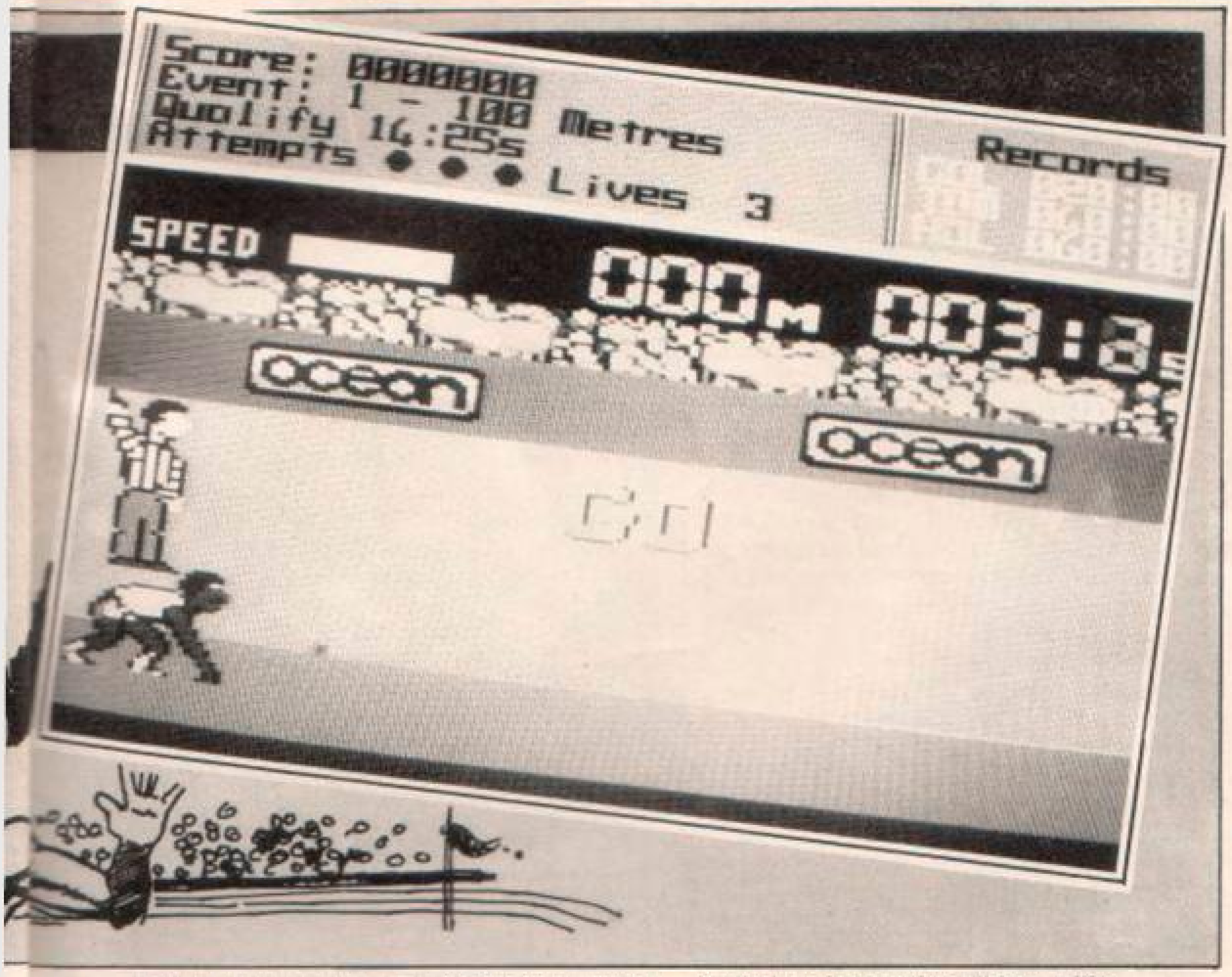
Amsoft/Computersmith, £8.95 cass, keys only

This golf course consists of 18 very testing holes and you'll need to play some pretty stunning golf to get your handicap of 16 any lower.

Each hole is shown from above with the fairway, rough, bunkers, trees, lakes and trees all in view. You have a full bag of clubs to select from driver down to putter. Once selected you pick the direction and strength of your shot and watch as it flies out across the ground.

If you've judged badly or had the misfortune to hook or slice your shot, you may find yourself bouncing off trees, plopping into lakes or just getting stuck in the rough. Needless to say you can't hit as far from the rough or bunkers.

Once you've got the ball to the green you're direction is assumed and you just have to decide the strength with which your 2D golfer



hits the ball. At the end of each hole you're shown your scorecard and again at the end of the round.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Nicely drawn holes.
▶ Challenging so that you need practice like the real thing.
▶ Very satisfying when you lower your handicap.

B A D N E W S

▶ Get among the trees and it can ruin a whole round.
▶ The best club choices on the computer aren't necessarily those for the real game.

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	14%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	67%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

FRANK N. STEIN

Amsoft/PSS, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The evil aim of this game is to build your own D.I.Y. monster and then deactivate him again. If this seems less than sensible you shouldn't be playing computer games.

The monster is made up of seven pieces of skeleton which you have to collect in the right order from the head down. They are strewn on the floors of dungeons which are filled with platforms and nasty surprises. You have to guide the good doctor Stein to the pieces which you automatically pick up.

Springs, slides and jump pads will help you get around the screen while patches of ice, sticky floors and light bulbs may hinder your progress. The main danger is the weird objects that move in patterns on the platforms - bump into them and you'll lose a life.

Having constructed the skeleton you have to activate it. Pretty quickly Frankie starts chucking things at you and your remaining task is to deactivate him as soon as possible.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Infuriatingly addictive as you try to crack screens.
▶ Cute touches like the animation of Stein.

B A D N E W S

▶ Disappointing sound effects - no music.
▶ May become TOO frustrating.

GRAPHICS	58%
SONICS	18%
GRAB FACTOR	64%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	65%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

BLAGGER

Alligata, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is one of the older breed of platform games and is very much in the *Manic Miner* tradition. It features the infamous thief Blagger as he tries to rob 20 screens of the contents of their safes.

Each screen has a number of keys which have to be collected before going to the safe which will take you to the next screen. The keys are positioned in such a way that there is usually only one route, leaping from platform to platform, by which they can all be collected and you can escape.

Hazards lie in wait everywhere with deadly moving objects, lethal bushes(?) and plenty of fatal long drops. You also have to watch where you tread since there are lots of conveyor belts and collapsing floors to catch you unawares.

There is an air time limit on each screen that is converted into a bonus score once you have reached the safe. Many jumps call for excellent timing while some of the route patterns will take some working out.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Platform action addictive as ever.
▶ The 20 screens offer a tough long-term challenge.

B A D N E W S

▶ Some sound effects are teeth-grating.
▶ Doesn't really offer anything over *Manic Miner*.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	57%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	59%
A A RATING	61%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

MR FREEZE

Firebird, £2.50 cass, joystick or keys

Set in a fridge you have to de-ice its six compartments. Each compartment has a de-icing box in the top right hand corner but also lots of platforms and hazards in between you and the box.

The six compartments are joined horizontally and can be de-iced in any order. To get to the box you have to climb ladders and jump holes in the floor while avoiding flying frozen food, ice cubes, robots (!) and deadly lasers.

After de-icing you have to get back to the bottom of the screen to get to another compartment. This can be as hazardous as getting up and both journeys call for a mixture of precision and fast action.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Taxing action and route finding.

B A D N E W S

▶ Slow main character movement.
▶ Not enough screens to keep you going.

GRAPHICS	44%
SONICS	10%
GRAB FACTOR	56%
STAYING POWER	40%
A A RATING	52%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

HUNCHBACK II

Ocean, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This sequel features our deformed hero trying to ring all the bells in his tower. He has to complete five screens packed with bats, arrows, ropes and platforms.

On each screen he has to collect all the little bells and on the last one he has to ring the large bells using the hammers. He gets about by jumping (awkward with a hump on your back) and by climbing ropes.

Each screen gets harder and calls for excellent timing and special features include

platforms on pulleys, grab hooks and bright green bouncing balls.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Colourful graphics and well-deformed animation.
▶ Better than its forerunner.
▶ Tougher than the CBM 64 version.

BAD NEWS

▶ Five screens may still not be enough.
▶ Can be very frustrating (addictive?).

GRAPHICS	75%
SONICS	68%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	74%

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

GHOSTBUSTERS

Activision, £10.99 cass, joystick only

Set on the streets of New York this is the game of the film. You have to rid the city of ghosts by closing the portal to the spirit world at Zuul. There are three types of screen in the game, each providing a different challenge to the player.

You start with $10,000 and with that have to buy one of four cars and equip it with ghostbusting technology. Once you start the game a map of several streets appears with you at your GHQ. The temple of Zuul is in the middle and from the four corners come roamers who try to reach Zuul. You move a ghostbusting symbol around and can freeze roamers by touching them.

When a building flashes red it means there is a slimer there and you should get there fast. You switch to a road which scrolls by your car and any frozen roamers can be sucked into a vacuum cleaner. When at a building with a slimer you have two men with streamers who can guide the ghost towards a trap before springing it and hopefully catching the nasty thing.

The game time limit is in the form of PK energy which is continually rising. If when it reaches 9999 you have more money then when you started you go to Zuul and try to sneak by the marshmallow man and close the portal. This nasty character – a sort of overgrown Michelin Man – also pops up in the game to try and trample buildings, costing you money.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Good music playing through game.
▶ Skill needed to catch ghosts and make lots of money.

BAD NEWS

▶ Screens can be very flickery.
▶ Speech in the game isn't very good.

GRAPHICS	54%
SONICS	76%
GRAB FACTOR	64%
STAYING POWER	54%
A A RATING	52%

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

ROLAND GOES DIGGING

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Based on *Space Panic* this game gives you the unusual task of digging holes for aliens to drop into so that you can kill them.

The action takes place on a single screen with five levels which are connected by randomly placed ladders. Little green aliens come in from the right hand side and wander around the levels.

You can dig holes in the floor into which the aliens fall and you can then knock them to their deaths for a cash bonus. If the aliens are left they will pull themselves out, fill in the hole and turn red as they pursue you in high dudgeon. This will also happen if they fall into a partially dug hole when the only way to dispose of them is to drop them through two levels at once.

Later stages have more aliens and this makes it harder to complete the screen within the time limit imposed. Contact with an alien loses you a life but you can safely fall through any number of your own holes.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Frenetic action and fast reflexes required.
▶ Increasing difficulty provides a challenge.

BAD NEWS

▶ Ideas and gameplay are old.
▶ Screen layouts are very similar.
▶ Dropping aliens through holes is all there is to do.

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	51%
GRAB FACTOR	60%
STAYING POWER	48%
A A RATING	54%

P U Z Z L E

CONFUZION

Incentive, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

This aptly-named game places you in a 64 level factory where you have to destroy its stock of confuzion bombs. Each level is represented by a box containing a network of fuzewire on a grid on the outside of which will appear the bombs.

Somewhere inside the grid appears a spark which burns along the wire. You have to guide the sparks to the bombs to explode them. You do this by shifting the sections of the grid into a space, much like a letter square puzzle. All this has to be done within a time limit set by a burning timer-fuze.

The spark's short existence is further reduced if it hits a dead end, solid block or runs off the edge of a block. It can be put out by drops of water that patrol the wire or by running out of time. When time is running low the revolving bombs turn yellow and you'll have to move very fast.

You can start at levels 1, 9, 17, 25, 33 or 41 but the later levels introduce some really fiendish layouts and more bombs. Lateral thinking is often required to get you to your goal.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Frantic, brain-teasing action.
▶ Refreshingly different gameplay.
▶ Lots of levels and complex problems.
▶ Free piece of music on side B of cassette.

BAD NEWS

▶ May have too high a frustration level for many.

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

GILLIGAN'S GOLD

Ocean, £6.90 cass, joystick or keys

Gilligan's gold is scattered in bags around a three-screen mine. Your task is to collect all the bags and put them into a wheelbarrow on the left hand screen. The three screens are connected by a network of tunnels, ladders, lifts and trolley tracks and are of the flick screen variety (not scrolling).

While you collect the bags you face danger from two outlaws who run about the mine and also from fatal falls down holes and collision with the trollies. You can stun the outlaws by dropping gold on them or by grabbing a pickaxe to hit them with. You can avoid the trollies, or get in them, by swinging up on hooks in the ceiling.

Each bag of gold has to be returned to the wheelbarrow within a time limit and for the gold on the furthest screen that takes careful timing. You can also get a special double bonus sack of gold but this isn't essential for completing the game which starts you all over again if you do.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Good graphics and animation.
▶ Cute high score table.
▶ Compulsively frustrating action battling against the time limit.
▶ Nice touch in being able to ride in trollies.

BAD NEWS

▶ Characters sometimes go flickery.
▶ Outlaws can trap you in a no-win situation.

GRAPHICS	72%
SONICS	11%
GRAB FACTOR	76%
STAYING POWER	71%
A A RATING	74%

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

SUPER PIPELINE II

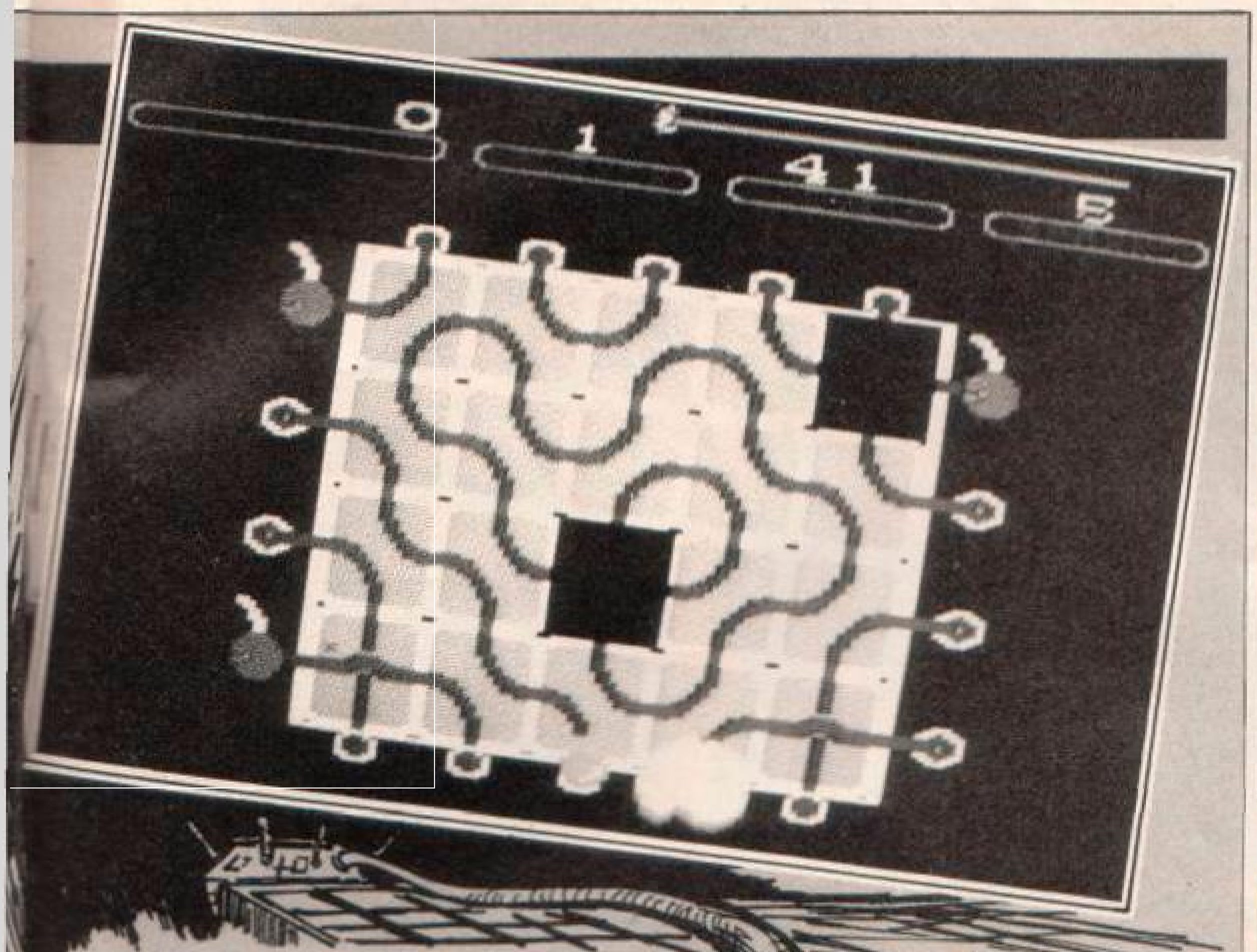
Taskset/Amsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This pipeline feeds a number of barrels and on each screen you have to fill one or more barrels with water from the pipe. The problem is that animals and tools keep trying to make holes in your pipe or knock you off it.

You control Foreman Fred who is aided and abetted by two workmates. You have a gun with which to shoot the tools and beasts that come onto the pipe from the screen edges, or you can sacrifice your workmates who will reappear anyway.

If there is a leak you have to lead a workmate to it for him to mend it with his little hammer. If leaks are left for too long you may start to run low on water and this decreases your score. Some tools are hard to hit while the lobster can only be shot from behind. The shower of tacks can't be destroyed, just knocked off by a workmate.





▶ The free music on side B is dreadful.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	75%
A A RATING	74%

GOOD NEWS

▶ Slick graphics and music.
▶ Addictive gameplay on this novel program.

BAD NEWS

▶ Characters disappear behind pipes when going up or down.
▶ The game is mastered too easily.

GRAPHICS	83%
SONICS	81%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	63%
A A RATING	71%

ARCADE-ACTION

KONG STRIKES BACK

Ocean, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

In the unlikely setting of a fairground this popular arcade villain has once again got a damsel in distress. You have to rescue her by running to the end of a rollercoaster track.

The track always starts in the bottom left of the screen and ends top right where Big K is holding the damsel prisoner. Along the track are ladders and at the top of these are letters to spell the word bonus and parts of a key. These are also used to avoid the cars which Kong sends down the track at you, or you can blow these up with your small supply of bombs.

There are only four different track layouts but once you have completed them new hazards like hobby horses, springs, bouncing balls and spinning seats are introduced. If any of these knocks you off the track you go bouncing around the screen like a jet-propelled breakout ball.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Slick graphics and great music.
▶ Better than the CBM 64 version.
▶ Fast, intense fairground action.
▶ Random spacing of cars means you can't do it every time.

BAD NEWS

▶ Moving around corners can be difficult.

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	74%
GRAB FACTOR	86%
STAYING POWER	81%
A A RATING	83%

ARCADE-ACTION

BRIDGE-IT

Amsoft/Epicsoft, £8.95 cass or free with 464, joystick or keys

In a town perched precariously over water the only way of getting from one house to another is by bridge. Unfortunately the bridges in this town have the annoying habit of flipping open and letting unsuspecting residents be dropped into the water.

The people appear at the top left of the screen and try to make their way across four bridges at the top, right, left and bottom of the screen. You have to lower each bridge for them to cross. Your task is complicated by the appearance of more than one person, making you switch rapidly between bridges.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Good screen layout.

BAD NEWS

▶ You have to repeat your options every time you start a game.
▶ Only one layout of bridges.
▶ No high score.

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	37%
GRAB FACTOR	36%
STAYING POWER	18%
A A RATING	20%

ARCADE-ACTION

ROLAND AHOY!

Amsoft/Computersmith, £8.95 cass, joystcik or keys

Our seasick little hero has turned to a life of piracy and has to steal treasure from the harbour and deposit it in his cave.

You initially control a ship on a map screen where you have to guide it past floating mines and a sea monster to get to the powder quay. Here you change to a screen where you have to jump a cannon ball in order to get some ammunition. He now goes to the harbour on the map and shoots holes in a protective boom until the ship fits through.

While avoiding another flying object he collects the treasure and returns to the ship. All that is left is to get to his cave where he avoids the falling rocks and spider to deposit the goodies.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Some nice graphics.
▶ Interesting interchange of tasks.

BAD NEWS

▶ Horrendous sound.
▶ Not enough stages to keep you happy.

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	20%
GRAB FACTOR	60%
STAYING POWER	51%
A A RATING	56%

ARCADE-ACTION

ER*BERT

Microbyte, £5.95 cass, joystick or keys

*Q*Bert* was an enormous hit in the arcades and this version has many of the qualities of that original. The game features a little long-snouted fellow who has to hop around a layout of cubes changing their surface colour.

There are four layouts of cubes and you start with a pyramid with you at the top. Jumping

onto a cube changes its colour and on later levels you have to jump on cubes twice to get the desired colour. The cubes are connected diagonally making it easier to play using the keyboard than the joystick. One wrong leap sends you plummeting to your death off the edge.

Dangers await though in the form of Coily the snake, Boris the gorilla, cascading balls who try to catch you and a black hole that appears on random cubes. Boris is particularly annoyed if you steal his banana but this gives you double points for each cube. You can shake off your pursuers by jumping on a transporter disc leaving them to fall to their deaths or by using a rota hat to move up and down levels.

GOOD NEWS

- ► Colourful graphics and clever cube layouts.
- ► Quick thinking and action required to survive.
- ► Lots of levels with some getting really hard.

BAD NEWS

- ► Instructions only appear once at start of game.
- ► Character graphics can be flickery.

GRAPHICS	63%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	73%
STAYING POWER	68%
A A RATING	70%

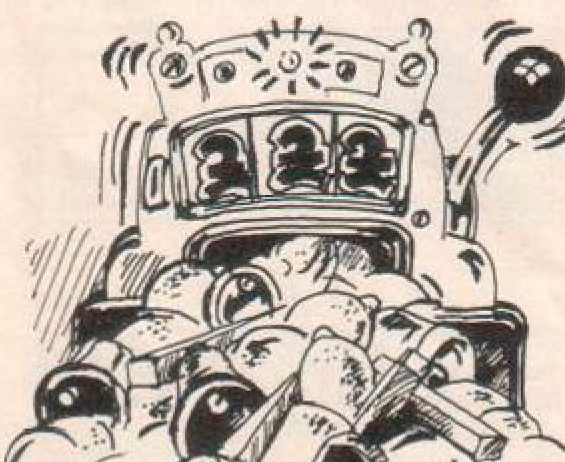
GAME-SIMULATION

FRUIT MACHINE

Amsoft, £8.95 cass or free with 464, keys only

Fruit machine programs have always been popular and this one is one of the best. It's got lots of features on it that make it a game of some skill as well as one of chance.

The game has three reels featuring the usual assortment of bells, bars, lemons and such. You have £5 to gamble with at 10p a spin (50 spins). If you get a winning combination you can collect, gamble, nudge or winner spin. Nudges allow you to nudge the reels while winner spinning automatically gives you a number of wins. There is even a list of the reels for those who want to cheat.



GOOD NEWS

- ► Colourful graphics.
- ► Good features.

BAD NEWS

- ► It doesn't pay real money.
- ► No variety and still mostly a game of chance.

GRAPHICS	56%
SONICS	35%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	38%
A A RATING	42%

SHOOT-EM-UP

HARRIER ATTACK

Amsoft/Durell, £8.95 cass or free with 464, joystick or keys

This is a scrolling shoot-'em-up featuring a carrier-borne fighter which takes off and moves left to right across a heavily defended landscape to reach an enemy base. Having bombed the base you can return to your ship (the display wraps around) to make another attack run.

While over water you will encounter two patrol boats which shoot guided missiles at you, as do enemy aircraft which fly in the opposite direction to you. Land-based installations will throw up flak at you but this is not usually fatal.

Gauges indicate your fuel, speed, rocket and bomb status and the bombs are what you use to take out the base. With rockets you need to be careful since flying into the explosions they leave damages your plane.

GOOD NEWS

- ► Reasonable scrolling shoot-'em-up once you've learnt to dodge missiles.
- ► Skill needed to shoot things.

BAD NEWS

- ► Graphics are simple and disappointing.
- ► Sound is tinny and Spectrumesque.

GRAPHICS	45%
SONICS	35%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	52%
A A RATING	53%

SHOOT-EM-UP

ALIEN BREAK-IN

Amsoft/Romik, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This shoot-'em-up will give you an aching fire digit on your first play because it's more a war of attrition than a quick zap. You are as ever defending your planet but this time you are protecting a shield below your base from being holed.

At the top of the screen is an indestructible mothership while whizzing around the middle are hordes of diving ships. These release two sorts of missiles that try to penetrate your defences. If a hole in the shield gets large enough a diving ship will enter it and turn into a mothership.

The motherships also release glowing pods which if allowed to reach the shield mutate into red aliens. They can only be stopped by digging a hole in your own defences. Attack ships also appear to bombard the defences but once there are enough motherships they start to descend the screen and try to crash into you.

GOOD NEWS

- ► Constant pressure from alien ships.
- ► Colourful fast moving graphics.

BAD NEWS

- ► It's all action, no thinking.
- ► Your fingers will get tired hitting the fire button.

GRAPHICS	59%
SONICS	40%
GRAB FACTOR	52%
STAYING POWER	31%
A A RATING	43%

SHOOT-EM-UP

ATOM SMASHER

Amsoft/Romik, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Set in the core of a nuclear reactor that has got completely out of control this game challenges you to delay melt-down. The reactor and core appear in the middle of the screen with an electron circling them. Your ship is an asteroid-type one which moves in eight directions and has a laser.

The proton moves round the core and when shot produces another electron, deadly if run into, but delays the meltdown that is encroaching from the edges of the screen.

You have two gauges indicating fuel and laser temperature and these both increase when unused but end the game if exhausted. Shooting the meltdown or running over it delays its progress but once it's reached the core the game is over.

GOOD NEWS

- ► Very difficult to score well and demands efficiency and fast action.

BAD NEWS

- ► Frustratingly hard game to do well at.
- ► Little lasting appeal in only one screen.
- ► Simple graphics and sound.

GRAPHICS	23%
SONICS	25%
GRAB FACTOR	47%
STAYING POWER	29%
A A RATING	33%

SPORT-SIMULATION

GRAND PRIX RALLY II

Amsoft/Loriciels, £8.95 cass, joystick only

Ten testing stages await the potential rally-driver in a reasonable version of the old arcade classic *Pole Position*. There are six different types of weather conditions you have to drive in with each one presenting its own particular problems that may stop you completing a stage within the time limit.

S H O O T - E M - U P

TANK BUSTERS

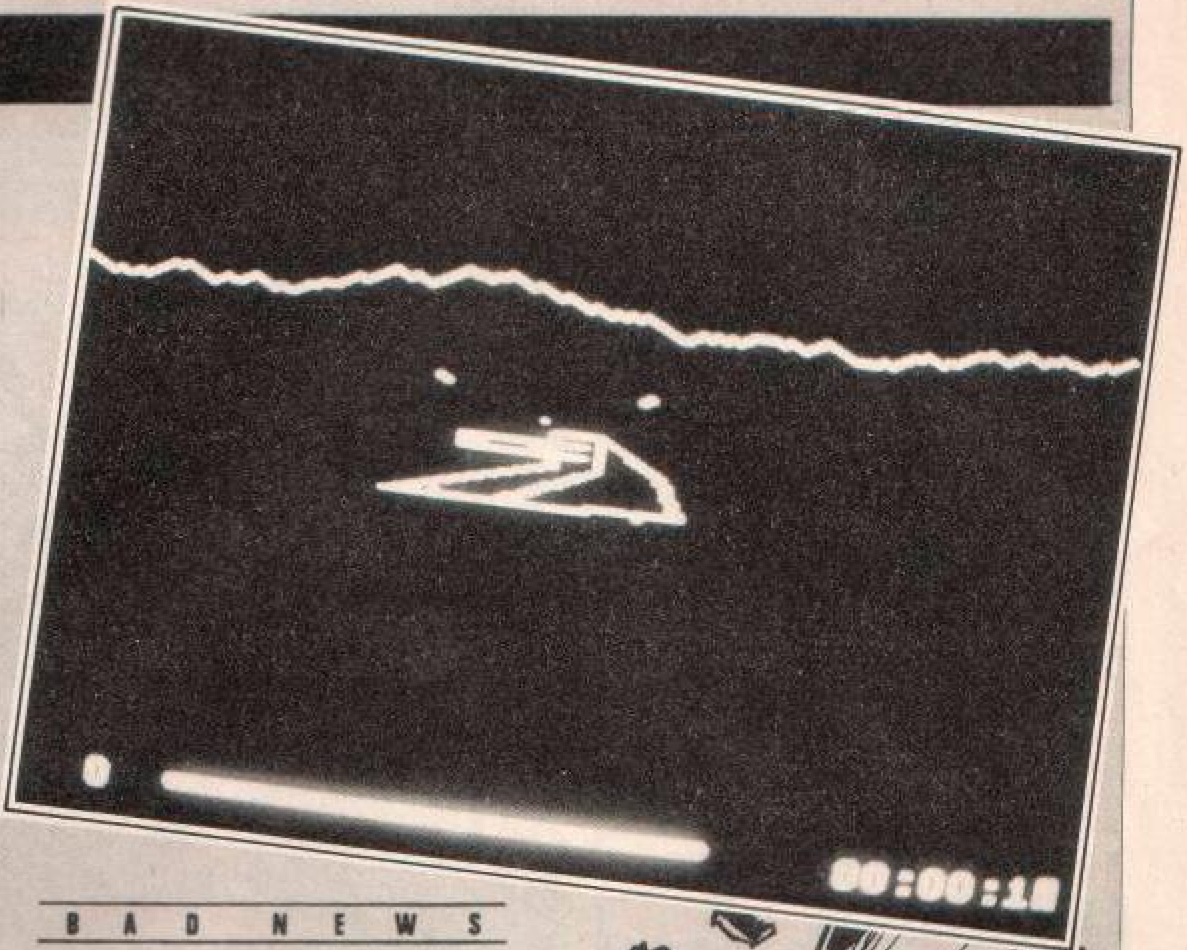
Design Design, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is a version of the arcade game *Battlezone* featuring vector graphic tank warfare on a magnificently destructive scale. The game places you on an asteroid where you have to wipe out the enemy tanks that are occupying it.

Your view is in the direction of your tank's gun and a head-up radar display shows you the enemy and missiles in the middle of the screen. The only other structures are blocks and pyramids while in the air is a flying saucer. This saucer has a rotating red square beneath it and if you put your tank on it it will replenish its shield.

The shield is damaged by enemy shell and missile fire and if they get close many shots can be quickly made. You also have shells and missiles, the difference between the two being that you can guide missiles to their target. You can even take a missile's eye view as it races into the distance.

Tanks and blocks explode into pieces which then bounce about the asteroid before disappearing. In the background there is volcanic activity across a mountain range but as with most things in the game the option screen will allow you to alter it.



G O O D N E W S

- **Brilliant vector graphics.**
- **Addictive blasting gameplay.**



- **Great options and sense of humour.**

B A D N E W S

- **There aren't enough games like this.**



GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	55%
GRAB FACTOR	90%
STAYING POWER	86%
A A RATING	88%

Your screen view is of the back of your car as it heads along the curving road encountering other uniform cars as it goes. Acceleration is automatic, leaving you free to control left-right movement and the brake. At full speed you approach the other cars very fast but unless you meet them on a corner they are easy to pass. Every car you pass gives you more time to complete the stage while crashing takes a large chunk off your allowed time.

There are two ways to crash, either into another car or into the sea which skirts the road on some stages. The stages include sunny weather , bridge, sea shore, night, snow and desert sections with the night and snow sections being extremely difficult. At night you can only see the taillights of cars in front making it easy to crash while on the snow you slide further than usual when you move.

You can change the nature of any of the stages with an editing function that allows you to change the length, direction and angle of any bend on the track to produce easier or harder courses that can be saved to tape. At the end of each stage you are given a score which is dependent on your speed through it and your time remaining.

G O O D N E W S

- Good perspective and reasonable graphics.
- Some tough stages which call for plenty of practice.
- Different conditions are good.
- Handy editing function.

B A D N E W S

- No control over acceleration.
- Other cars can pass through each other.
- Hard to tell when you will and won't hit other cars.

GRAPHICS	71%
SONICS	55%
GRAB FACTOR	56%
STAYING POWER	72%
A A RATING	65%

S P O R T - S I M U L A T I O N

HANDICAP GOLF

CRL, £6.95 cass, keys only

The object of this game is to get everything to go straight down the middle of the fairway and into that little hole on the green. You can play a full 18 holes or a half round of nine.

You start at the first tee and can select any one of 15 clubs (4 woods, 8 irons, a putter, pitching wedge and sand wedge). You then select the direction you wish to hit the ball in and an animated golfer plays the shot showing you the ball's trajectory. The distance for each club is fixed and wind will only slightly affect length and direction.

Careless strokes can go out of bounds or in a bunker. Once you're on the green the display switches to an overhead view and you have to determine the direction and strength of putt in the light of the slope of the green. All holes play left to right and par for the course is 70.

G O O D N E W S

- **Skilful putting is needed.**
- **You can easily get under par.**

B A D N E W S

- **Not enough unpredictability in the length or direction of shots.**
- **Gameplay is slow and repetitive.**
- **The 18 holes are very similar.**

GRAPHICS	55%
SONICS	10%
GRAB FACTOR	53%
STAYING POWER	37%
A A RATING	41%

S P O R T - S I M U L A T I O N

TEST MATCH

CRL, £6.95 cass, keys only

The cricket season may be just ending but you can keep playing with this game, although it appeals more to the statistician than the action player. You can play limited over or test match cricket with two players but both options are basically the same.

Having selected your game you can name



your own side or use the computer's but each team can have a maximum of six bowlers. Once play begins you are shown a view of the ground with stick men representing the batsmen and fielders. The bowling is done automatically, as is the batting, and the result is worked out by a formula depending on the current situation.

If the ball is hit you decide whether to run or not and the risk of run outs can be high. Batsmen can be out in all the usual ways and the rules for one day cricket (four versions) and test cricket (450 overs) are obeyed.

You decide who will bowl and who will come in to bat and your choice must consider skill, fatigue and the match position.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Reasonable games of cricket can be played.
▶ There are several types of game available.

BAD NEWS

▶ There is little action – just decisions as to whether to run or not.
▶ The graphics are disappointing.
▶ Not much interest if you don't like cricket.

GRAPHICS	21%
SONICS	8%
GRAB FACTOR	44%
STAYING POWER	53%
A A RATING	50%

SPORT-SIMULATION

WORLD CUP

Artic, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys or joystick with keys

This World Cup takes place on a three-screen-wide scrolling pitch where two teams of six players kick it out. The pitch scrolls horizontally with two defenders, one midfielder, two attackers and a goalkeeper on either side, keeping to their respective zones.

You can play against another player or the computer and can choose one of ten teams. You can also have a tournament where eight players can take part. You control the player on your side who is nearest the ball (his shorts change colour). If the other side have the ball you can dispossess them by running into them.

To shoot you just press fire while moving goalward. If your own goal is threatened you can make the keeper dive by pressing fire. The game clock runs down from 90 and you change ends at 45.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Exciting two-player action plus a good computer opponent.
▶ Thrilling to score a goal and win matches.

BAD NEWS

▶ Player animation and overlapping is bad.
▶ Scrolling is rather jerky.

GRAPHICS	52%
SONICS	28%
GRAB FACTOR	73%
STAYING POWER	66%
A A RATING	68%

SPORT-SIMULATION

CENTRE COURT

Amsoft/Epicsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Tennis has been a popular game on computers ever since the days of Pong but this is the first version on the Amstrad. The court is viewed side on with two rather crudely defined players, one at either end.

The ball is served by pressing the fire button, once to throw it up and again to hit it. From there on you can move the player freely around the court and by pressing the fire button strike the ball.

The play tends to be mostly baseline and you can't really volley. You can control the strength and direction of your shots by the timing but this will take plenty of practice.

There is a demo mode and you can play against the computer or a friend, but once you've started a match you have to finish it or reset the computer.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Good computer opponent who isn't easily beaten.

BAD NEWS

▶ Crude graphics.
▶ No variation in strokes.
▶ No reset to start game again.

GRAPHICS	37%
SONICS	22%
GRAB FACTOR	46%
STAYING POWER	56%
A A RATING	48%

SPORT-SIMULATION

ALEX HIGGINS' WORLD SNOOKER

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

You are thrown into the high-pressure world of snooker where you and a friend battle it out on the green baize. But you don't have to start with the full 15 reds – you can have six or ten instead.

The table is displayed with the familiar layout of snooker balls (you can number the colours if you have a green screen) and you can place the cue ball anywhere in the D. You aim the cue ball with a circular cursor and then have to decide the strength of the shot and whether to put on any top, back, left or right spin.

You have to pot a red first and then a colour before potting another red. All the usual fouls are given except you can't get a free ball when snookered off a foul shot. The game tells you your highest break at the end of the game. There is also speech synthesis for those with the SSA-1 synthesiser.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Two-player games are interesting.
▶ Easy shot selection.

BAD NEWS

▶ The balls are large and jerky.
The definition isn't high enough to make accurate play possible.

STRATEGY

CLASSIC RACING

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, keys only

You're the owner of a stable of 16 horses and along with five other players, who can be computer controlled, you compete in a flat-racing season to see who can make the most money.

There are up to 16 meetings in a season with six races in each and eight classic races at the end. As the meetings occur each player has to select a horse for each race, initially with no guide to form. The races are from 5 furlongs to one and a half miles and different horses will be suited to different distances and going.

While you're selecting your horses you can study the race programme for the season and also see your opponents' choices. If a horse fails to be selected for three consecutive meetings it is dropped and costs you £1000 for every meeting it misses.

There are three types of races – minor, principal and classics – with correspondingly increasing prize money. Once at the meeting you are given a chance to bet on one of the six horses and then the race is run. The horses walk to the line and then gallop down the course, right to left on the screen. The scale distance are accurate and the leaders will come and go, often with an exciting finish as you illogically roar your horse on.

Once the race is over you get any prize money or betting win due you and are shown the overall status of each player. The horses also build up a form book and winnings. Finding out which horse is good over which distance and ground is vital.



GOOD NEWS

▶ Gripping race action.

▶ It isn't as good as Steve Davis's snooker. Graphics

GRAPHICS	47%
SONICS	55%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	48%
A A RATING	54%

STRATEGY

ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE

Amsoft/Temptation, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

You are in command of the famous German pocket battleship and have to cruise around the south Atlantic sinking as much enemy shipping as possible. There are two basic screens: one a map of the south Atlantic with your ship marked and the other a close-up when engaged in battle.

You start next to your supply ship the Altmark with a full load of fuel. Enemy ships appear on the map as flashing dots and before you can engage in combat you must move your ship to one of their locations. Pressing 'S' will then give you a view of the surrounding sea. You are given the range and direction of the enemy ship and if you're on course you see it ahead of you.

You can use guns and torpedoes to sink vessels but they can shoot back and you only have a limited supply of ammo. Frankly even this bit of the game is fairly boring as you can't really aim your shots beyond having the



▶ Plenty of thinking and planning needed to find your best horses.
▶ Multi-player action provides great excitement.
▶ The computer runs a good race plan.
▶ You can get utterly hooked without losing any money.

B A D N E W S

▶ On the other hand it might drag you into the real thing.

GRAPHICS	46%
SONICS	33%
GRAB FACTOR	94%
STAYING POWER	92%
A A RATING	90%

correct range, and you can't dodge enemy missiles. The game ends when you are sunk or you fail to contact your supply ship to replenish fuel and ammo.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Less painful than drowning.

B A D N E W S

▶ Graphics and sound give you that sinking feeling. ▶ Little depth to the game.

GRAPHICS	22%
SONICS	21%
GRAB FACTOR	44%
STAYING POWER	37%
A A RATING	38%

S T R A T E G Y

3D TIME TREK

Anirog, £ 6.95 cass, joystick with keys

Star Trek was one of the earliest computer games and this is yet another version of it but with so called 3D action. The idea is to defend an 8x8 galaxy against attack from an alien invasion fleet with yours being the only ship.

You start by examining the sectors around your ship with the long range scanners. Every time you do this it updates the galactic map accordingly. Having found an enemy sector you can warp to it using the navigation computer where a red alert will sound and alien ships move across your view one at a time while you try and hit them using a cursor.

Having cleared the sector you move on to another until the galaxy is cleared or you are destroyed. You have two gauges for energy and shield strength and these are reduced by enemy hits and have to be replenished by making a lunar lander-style landing on a planet.

G O O D N E W S

▶ It's very nostalgic and brough back happy memories.

B A D N E W S

▶ The graphics and sound are simple.
▶ The gameplay is very simple and repetitive.
▶ Old memories don't make good new games.

GRAPHICS	24%
SONICS	20%
GRAB FACTOR	33%
STAYING POWER	28%
A A RATING	30%

S T R A T E G Y

SOFTWARE STAR

Addictive Games, £7.95 cass, keys only

This strategy game puts you in charge of a software house for whom you do all the programming and make all the financial decisions. Your aim is to become a software star by getting your games to number one in the charts.

You start with the target of making #10,000 in one year and with one game in production, called Software Star of course. The first thing you have to decide is what your next game is to be called and this will be worked on over the next few months till you think it is good enough to release. Next you have to decide how to encourage productivity and sales and how to improve your public image.

Now comes the most crucial part of the game where you have to determine how many pages of advertising should be bought for a game. Your game now starts to climb its way up the charts, increasing sales as it goes, hopefully past a break even point. You're now told your financial position and whether you're a star yet before beginning another month.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Gives some idea of the problems and tension in software industry.
▶ Has seven skill levels from easy to impossible.

B A D N E W S

▶ There isn't enough choice in decision making to maintain interest.
▶ No graphics or sound to speak of.

GRAPHICS	14%
SONICS	11%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	47%
A A RATING	46%

S T R A T E G Y

MILLIONAIRE

Incentive, £6.95 cass, keys only

The name of the game is a giveaway - you've got to make a million, and all through your skills as a programmer and financial genius. You start with one program and #500 so it's a pretty tall order.

The game is purely one of strategy (and a smidgin of luck) and takes several stages. First you have to decide whether to specialise in one type of game. The main game sequence starts with a picture of your current offices (humble beginnings) followed by a bar chart of your software sales. You're then given any news regarding magazines, fairs and the industry that might affect sales.

After deciding which of six things to work on that month you are into the marketing stage with decisions on special ideas, advertising, duplicating costs and production. If you're still in business you'll see if you've moved into a better office and what your current status is.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Plenty to keep you busy.
▶ Very difficult to make that million.

B A D N E W S

▶ Repeating the main game-loop may become boring.

▶ Things get frustrating once you've made about #50,000.

GRAPHICS	18%
SONICS	13%
GRAB FACTOR	61%
STAYING POWER	58%
A A RATING	53%

S T R A T E G Y

ALIEN

Amsoft/Argus Press, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The film was full of terrifying suspense and although the game recreates some of that cliffhanging panic, many gamers may not get into it that much. The action takes place on the three decks of the spaceship Nostromo where a virtually indestructible alien is marauding.

You can play long or short games in which you control respectively six or three members of the crew at one time and have several possible aims. You can scuttle the ship, escape in the shuttle or try to blow the alien out of an airlock. The screen shows a map of the deck you are on, a command monitor of the actions you can take and a report monitor of what is happening to you and other members of the crew.

There are plenty of items to be picked up and used, and lots of rooms to be explored. You can also get around the ship by using ducting but beware: the alien also uses this a lot. Once the alien has got hold of a crew member there is little you can do since he does his work ruthlessly. However the sound emitted by 'trackers', the movement of Jones the cat, and removed grilles to ducts will all give indications as to where the alien is.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Challenging game of strategy and tactics.
▶ Original game concept and gameplay.
▶ Good film tie in which captures the atmosphere.

B A D N E W S

▶ May not be a clear enough game objective.
▶ Frustration can set in at the lack of rewarding actions.

GRAPHICS	48%
SONICS	39%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	65%

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

SULTAN'S MAZE

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass or free with 464, keys only

This is a simple maze game in which you have to track down six rubies and remove them from the maze without running out of energy or being caught by the ghost. The maze is displayed in perspective and you can move around it using the numeric keypad.

The rubies have to be picked up and taken to the exit while avoiding the guardian. He can fairly easily be tricked or if necessary you can jump through a hedge to get past him. Your energy is reduced by moving, carrying jewels and jumping through hedges but is replenished with each visit to the exit. Collecting all the jewels reveals six letters for a code word.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Different mazes and occasionally tricky action.

B A D N E W S

▶ Very slow graphics when drawing the maze.
▶ Gameplay tends to be slow and uninteresting.
▶ The same task gets repetitive.

GRAPHICS	31%
SONICS	10%
GRAB FACTOR	34%
STAYING POWER	27%
A A RATING	29%

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

MUTANT MONTY

Amsoft/Artic, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is what you might call *Manic Miner* without the jumping. Monty has to collect several lots of gold off 40 screens and only when he has got the lot can he exit to the next screen and rescue the damsel at the end of the game.

Each screen has the gold tucked away in tricky places which are guarded by the usual weird collection of implausible aliens. Monty moves around in rather an odd way, continuing in the direction you start him in and accelerating if you keep pushing in that direction.

Most gold bars are positioned so that getting to them requires not only good timing but very fast movement too. All the aliens follow regular movement patterns but sometimes the interlocking of two or more aliens may force you to wait until the exact right moment appears.

There is a time limit for each screen and if this runs out or you bump into an alien then you lose one of your lives. The inertia on Monty is a little odd at first but with practice it allows you to nip into some tight corners.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Lots of testing screens.
▶ Some nice aliens and screen layouts.

B A D N E W S

▶ Odd character control.
▶ Not a very original game.

GRAPHICS	59%
SONICS	53%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	59%
A A RATING	60%

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

HUNCHBACK

Amsoft/Ocean, £8.95 cass, joystick only

This game launched the deformed bellringer as a computer hero but since those early days it's lost some of its sparkle.

You control Quasimodo who is at the left hand end of a castle rampart and has to cross 15 stages of it to rescue his sweetheart Esmerelda. Each stage consists of one or more gaps that have to be crossed by jumping or swinging on ropes. At the end of each stage you ring a bell and five bells without a death brings a healthy bonus.

There are many dangers along the way including soldiers with spears, fireballs,

S T R A T E G Y

MINDER

Dk'tronics, £9.95 cass, keys only

As Arthur Daley you take your place in the sleazy, underhand, double-dealing world of the London black market. You have 15 days in which to concoct as many shady deals and make as much folding greenstuff as possible.

You start at home with #2000 and four possible destinations. At each of these you will see a small graphic representation in the middle of the screen with the faces of those present on either side. Below is a box in which you can have conversations with people either at your instigation or theirs.

The four locations are the lock-up, the Winchester club, Terry's flat or a dealer's premises. Your aim is to buy various items like ballcocks, coffins and commodes and sell them for a healthy profit. Goods can be bought and sold from people in the Winchester or from a dealer and you'll have to haggle over price and quantity in appropriate cockney slang.

Terry can act as your minder (some punters can turn nasty) and also collect and deliver goods. He and other people are often hard to track down and you have a limited number of hours of the day in which to deal. At the end of the game Arthur himself pops up to tell you how you've done.

G O O D N E W S

▶ Great facial animation.
▶ Good atmosphere and humour.
▶ Absorbing trading and wheeler-dealing.

B A D N E W S

▶ Conversations can scroll by too fast.
▶ There isn't anything else apart from the trading.





GRAPHICS	86%
SONICS	73%
GRAB FACTOR	84%
STAYING POWER	71%
A A RATING	78%

arrows and a knight who climbs the wall on each screen as a time limit.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Compulsive urge to get one screen further.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Not much variety in the basic screen.
- ▶ The graphics and sound are simple.

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	21%
GRAB FACTOR	56%
STAYING POWER	47%
AA RATING	49%

ARCADE-ACTION

SPANNERMAN

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

A nuclear reactor is about to turn a large chunk of Britain hotter than an vindaloo, so who do they call in to save the day ? The local plumber of course. Needless to say that's you and your job as a plumber is to tighten all the joints in the pipes of the reactor cooling system.

There are four pipes on four levels of the screen each with five joints which have to be tightened with your spanner if they start leaking. The water collects at the bottom of the screen and you can only spend so much time submerged.

Giant mutated rats are flushed out by the water and you can kick these to stop them killing you. The earthquake that started the trouble is still going and the occassional chunk of debris will drop from the ceiling and kill you if you get in the way.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Economy of effort and fast work required.



BAD NEWS

- ▶ Only a one-screen game.
- ▶ You can't actually "win".

GRAPHICS	51%
SONICS	34%
GRAB FACTOR	48%
STAYING POWER	41%
AA RATING	43%

ARCADE-ACTION

TRAFFIC

Amsoft/Andromeda, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Your job is to control traffic flow by switching traffic lights. You're given an overhead view of a layout of junctions and by moving a cursor you have to try to keep traffic flowing and not let any jams build up.

There are several different junction layouts of increasing complexity and on each one you have to get enough cars off screen before a long tailback builds up off screen at any junction. The cars are just different sizes of white rectangles but sometimes they will flash indicator lights for the direction they want to turn.

The lights switch straight from red to green and back again although as you would expect the cars do not respond immediately. The game is accompanied by appropriate noises, particularly the honking of horns if you allow a queue to build up. These become dangerous when they stretch off screen as a counter will inform you of the numbers. If this gets too high you fail.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ A quick thinking, cool head is required.
- ▶ An original and interesting game idea.
- ▶ Car movement and sound effects are good.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Only a one screen game although the layouts change.
- ▶ Directing the traffic may get boring (how would you like to be a traffic cop?).
- ▶ It's always like rush hour at the Hangar Lane gyratory system.

GRAPHICS	44%
SONICS	43%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	42%
AA RATING	46%

ARCADE-ACTION

HAUNTED HEDGES

Amsoft/Micromega, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Versions of *Pacman* have always been in abundance but this one is in pseudo 3D. The maze is constructed of hedges which actually have depth so that you can go behind them. When moving through a gap have to remember it is in perspective.

The aim is to guide your stick-man around the maze picking up gold coins (munching dots) while avoiding the four guardians (ghosts). Once you start your man moving in a direction he keeps going until he hits a wall so you have to keep alert for guardians coming the other way.

There are objects that appear for bonus points (fruits), while getting an ice axe (power pill) will let you chase after the ghosts for a short time and try and send them back to their base for a bonus.

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Increasing difficulty.
- ▶ *Pacman* has always been addictive.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Poor graphics and animation.
- ▶ Very unoriginal.

GRAPHICS	33%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	39%
AA RATING	43%

ARCADE-ACTION

QUACK A JACK

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

You are trapped in a 16 level dungeon where monsters pursue you around as you try to crush eggs before they hatch. The problem is that the floor crumbles away after you've walked on it and with five eggs to get you've got to tread carefully.

You appear as a duck and there is a time limit in which you must get each egg before it hatches into a deadly terraductile. If your route is blocked by a gap where you have previously walked then you can shift the row of floor to make a path. The screen wraps around but you have to watch out for the wacky but deadly inhabitants and cooking pots to avoid blundering into them.

There is treasure to be collected on each screen but once five eggs have been destroyed you move on to a screen with more monsters

GOOD NEWS

- ▶ Fast thinking and planning needed.
- ▶ Panic action against increasing odds.

BAD NEWS

- ▶ Not much depth to the game.
- ▶ You can only move rows and not columns of the floor.

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	21%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	66%
AA RATING	67%

ARCADE-ACTION

JAMMIN

Amsoft/Taskset, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Rankin' Rodney has to get together four instruments in order to get that groove sound. He has to do it amongst the garish moving colours

of the instrument dumping ground.

There are 20 screens made up of a patchwork of four colours. One instrument will correspond to each colour zone and has to be picked up and brought back to the centre of the screen where a triangle flashes to indicate its place. The patchwork is arranged into a maze with moving belts of colours which transport you around until you want to get off.

Things aren't easy though since you have some non-musical enemies to contend with. Bum notes will send your instrument back to the start if they get you while distortions steal it and play totally out of key. Dischords are the worst and if you run into them you lose a life.

Each screen has a time limit and if you haven't got all four instruments together you'll lose a life. The tunes change for each screen as do the mazes but each tune is best when you've got an instrument since it plays the full tune with a drum beat, bass and harmony.

GOOD NEWS

- **Fantastic music with many different tunes.**
- **Garishly colourful graphics.**
- **Novel gameplay and scenario.**

BAD NEWS

- **The colours and gameplay may not appeal to all.**

GRAPHICS	59%
SONICS	95%
GRAB FACTOR	74%
STAYING POWER	69%
AA RATING	72%

ARCADE-ACTION

BINKY

Software Projects, £5.95 cass, joystick or keys

This cross between *Q*Bert* and *Painter* games sets you the task of changing the colour of a 3D floor layout by walking over it. There are 21 layouts which have to be painted and the later ones require two or even three coats of paint.

You change the colour of a part of the floor by just walking over it and repeating the action if more than one coat is needed. The trouble is that the floor is floating around in mid air and is populated by some nasty little creatures.

Binky moves quite fast and consequently you have to be very alert not to run him off the edge of the floor where he will fall to his death. The other dangers that await him are little, flat, red monsters, bigger green monsters and some decidedly nasty killer balls. The flat creatures appear on the floor and after hesitating for a moment move in one direction until they hit Binky or run into the edge of the floor where they disappear.

Green beasts are altogether nastier since they home in on you. They appear first as a stationery green circle with a number counting down on them. Once they hatch they make a beeline for you. They can be stopped by running over them before they hatch or guiding to a hole where they fall through. The balls are more intelligent still and will avoid the holes, making life very difficult indeed.

You are told some nice cheat modes to use on the game but for me this seemed to spoil the challenge.

GOOD NEWS

- **Colourful graphics.**
- **Fast reflex action.**
- **Clever screen layouts and enemies.**

BAD NEWS

- **'Official' cheat mode spoils the challenge.**
- **Frustratingly easy to run off edge of floor.**
- **Not a very original game concept.**

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	66%
STAYING POWER	58%
AA RATING	60%

ARCADE-ACTION

ROLAND ON THE RUN

Amsoft/Epicsoft, £8.95 cass, keys only

Roland is escaping from Amsoft (can you blame him with games like this) and is stowed away on a train. You have to get him and up to 254 others (big train) off the train and into their hideouts via some passing lorries.

There is only one screen with a detailed scrolling background, a train in the middle, lorries and cars going both ways on a road and the hideouts at the bottom. You can control the speed of the train to match that of the first row of lorries and when a man on the train flashes jump him onto a lorry.

When a man in a lorry flashes you can jump him to lorries travelling in the opposite direction and from there to the hideout. You have up to 255 lives and you lose one every time you miss a jump. On tougher levels the traffic speeds up and slows down to make your task even harder.

GOOD NEWS

- **Excellent hi-res colour display.**

BAD NEWS

- **Boring repetitive gameplay.**
- **Stickman character graphics.**
- **Timing of jumps isn't made clear.**

Graphics

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	36%
GRAB FACTOR	35%
STAYING POWER	27%
AA RATING	29%

ARCADE-ACTION

SPLAT!

Amsoft/Incentive, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Odd little game this with some good addictive touches and a high originality factor. It takes place on a randomly scrolling screen where you control a four-legged crawling thing called Zippy.

He appears in the middle of the screen (you can choose several background colours) surrounded by black patches of ground and little sprigs of green grass. The screen will start to scroll left, right, up or down and if you run off the edge you are splatted. It will also change direction periodically so you have to keep your wits about you.

While avoiding this nasty end you have to run over the patches of grass until you have enough to move onto the next, and of course harder, level. Your job is made difficult by the black areas which can delay you or trap you so that the scroll will get you. Water and other objects will also splat you so you have to be careful where you tread.

GOOD NEWS

- **Original idea and gameplay.**
- **Great character set.**
- **You're on the go 100% of the time.**

BAD NEWS

- **Graphics and sound are simple.**
- **When you lose a life you always have to start from square one.**

GRAPHICS	51%
SONICS	38%
GRAB FACTOR	69%
STAYING POWER	61%
AA RATING	63%

ARCADE-ACTION

CATASTROPHES

Amsoft/Andromeda, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

You've got to construct a building in the North Sea that will stand up to everything the weather can throw at it. You've only got a helicopter to do it with and a target that has to be met at the end of the day.

The screen shows two already started buildings with cliffs and a lighthouse behind. Two helicopters appear beside each building above a barge carrying a building block. You have to pick up the block and place it on the building accurately or it will drop into the sea.

Each block scores points and each extra storey scores more. The sun moves across the screen acting as a time-limit and from time to time the lighthouse will flash to indicate bad

ARCADE-ACTION

FRUITY FRANK

Kuma, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys



This a variant of the arcade game *Dig-Dug* in which you have to go running around in the garden while being pursued by a very deadly group of monsters.

Your job is to collect up the fruit that is lying around – cherries, bananas, grapes, oranges and more. However you are chased by monsters who have come out of a hole in the ground or mutated from plums that drop from the top of the screen.

There are also apples lying around and these can be pushed or dropped onto the monsters to kill them. They can also crush you though. Your other weapon is a ball which will bounce around the garden *Breakout*-style, until it kills a monster or is caught again by you.

If you fill in the hole a green monster appears and if you kill five of them to spell the word BONUS that's exactly what you get. Waiting around too long though brings out a lethal strawberry who homes in on you very fast.

weather approaching. Lightning storms can destroy whole columns while earthquakes and hurricanes may remove many blocks and floods will submerge the lower levels of the building.

You have four helicopters and will lose one if you crash into the jet plane that flies across the screen. The game can be played by two players, one player against the computer or even a demo by the computer.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Panic action as you try to meet targets.
▶ Nice idea for a game.

BAD NEWS

▶ Repetitive gameplay.

GRAPHICS	60%
SONICS	62%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	65%
A A RATING	66%

ARCADE-ACTION

ELECTRO FREDDY

Amsoft/Softspot, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The popular subject of this game is redundancy and taking the mickey out of the software industry. That's because the villain in this game is Uncle Claude of Sincrum Research. He wants to increase the prices of his products and that means potential job losses (where have I heard that before?).

You, as Electro Freddy, have to stop him by getting the goods out of the warehouse to the shops. The warehouse is a single screen with a conveyor belt running along the bottom and 12 of one product scattered around the room. You have to push the objects down to the belt while avoiding the bespectacled Claude, who shoots spectrims and the oracs that occasionally fall down the screen.

There are fifteen levels of four types of screen, two of which have a force barrier with a moving gap in it just above the belt. Each level has a different product. Claude can be killed by pushing a product vertically into him while bonuses can be got by collecting a custard pie from the top right of the screen.

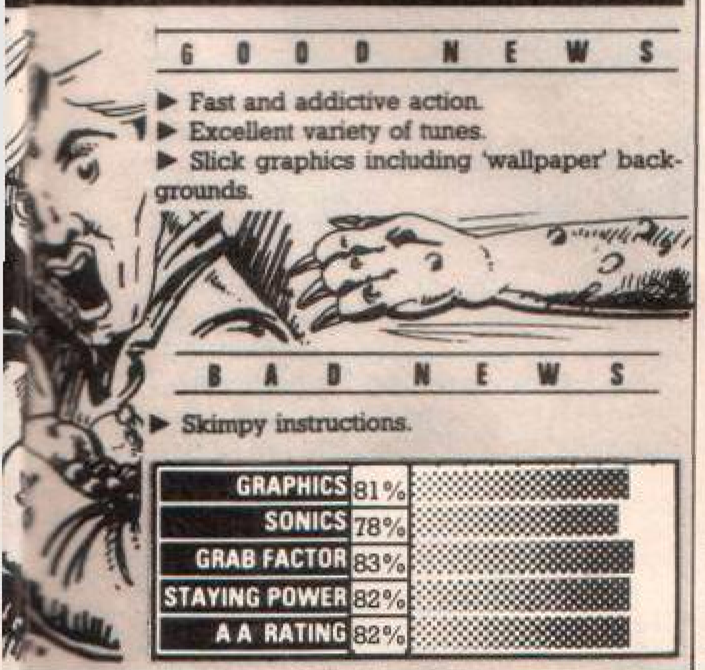
GOOD NEWS

▶ Frantic action is demanded - you'll have to act fast.
▶ Nice humour behind the game.
▶ The levels get quite tough.

BAD NEWS

▶ It's only really a one screener.
▶ The game doesn't live up to the plot.

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	61%
STAYING POWER	55%
A A RATING	57%



GOOD NEWS

▶ Fast and addictive action.
▶ Excellent variety of tunes.
▶ Slick graphics including 'wallpaper' backgrounds.

BAD NEWS

▶ Skimpy instructions.

GRAPHICS	81%
SONICS	78%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	82%
A A RATING	82%

ARCADE-ACTION

PUNCHY

Amsoft/Mr Micro, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Hunchback has spawned many copies and this is one of them. The castle has been replaced by a Punch and Judy stage, Quasimodo by a policeman and the arrows and fireballs by custard pies and tomatoes.

You control Bobby the cop who has to jump, duck and plod his way across 16 screens to rescue Judy from the evil Mr Punch. The custard pies and tomatoes fly across the screen forcing you to jump over or duck under them. You have to jump gaps in the stage and use flying carpets to cross alligator pits.

On some screens a sausage will fly across the top of the screen and if you can jump and catch three of them you can warp to the next screen or save them for later use. Instead of bonus bells you get bonus helmets for rocking the baby at the right of each screen.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Better than the original.
▶ Addictively frustrating gameplay as you try to get one screen further.
▶ Colourful graphics.

BAD NEWS

▶ It's still a rip-off copy.
▶ Can get TOO frustrating.

GRAPHICS	54%
SONICS	32%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	51%
A A RATING	55%

ARCADE-ACTION

OH MUMMY

Amsoft/Gem, £8.95 cass or free with 464, keys only

Ancient Egypt is the setting and your task is to find the royal mummies inside a pyramid. There are five levels in a pyramid and each level is represented by a rectangle containing twenty boxes.

Each box may contain treasure, a royal mummy, a scroll, a guardian mummy or nothing at all. To reveal the contents of a box you have to run round it with the character you control, leaving a footstep trail. Once you have discovered the royal mummy and key you can escape to the next level.

Guardian mummies will end one of your lives if they catch you unless you have found the scroll which will protect you against one of them. Completing all five levels takes you on to another pyramid.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Pleasant Egyptian music.
▶ Fast reaction gameplay on higher levels of game.

BAD NEWS

▶ Not much complexity.
▶ No changes in the pyramid layouts or task.

GRAPHICS	61%
SONICS	66%
GRAB FACTOR	60%
STAYING POWER	42%
A A RATING	48%

SHOOT-EM-UP

THE KEY FACTOR

Amsoft, £8.95 cass, keys only

This is a simple little program that tries to make you learn the layout of the keyboard while playing a game. The game itself is all too familiar, with aliens descending the screen to be blasted.

There are eight boxes at the bottom of the screen and in each one a letter or symbol. From the top of the screen aliens descend to try and break through the defensive wall above the box. Pressing the key corresponding to the symbol in the box will fire a laser to destroy the alien.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Colourful graphics.
▶ Fast thinking and fingers needed.

BAD NEWS

▶ Interest won't last long.
▶ Won't teach you to touch type.

GRAPHICS	44%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	35%
STAYING POWER	24%
A A RATING	28%

SHOOT-EM-UP

CODENAME MAT

Amsoft/Micromega, £8.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

Based on the classic *Star Raiders*, this game involves defending the solar system against an invasion fleet of Myons. There are seven defence zones based around the outer planets



and their moons, with Earth the target at the core.

Your shields protect the ship against enemy photon bolts while you have two photon tubes of your own that fire both forward and backward. You also have a tracking system which switches views to face the object being tracked. Your battle computer gives readouts on an objects direction and range.

The long-range scan shows you objects in the nearby space while the sector scan shows the area around a planet. The solar chart shows the whole system and the status of the Centurion's systems.

G O O D N E W S

- Plenty of depth of control and game size.
- Even lowest level is tough.
- Tactics required as well as fast blast action.

B A D N E W S

- Lots of key controls can be confusing.
- 3D graphics aren't that good.

GRAPHICS	54%
SONICS	45%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	71%

S H O O T - E M - U P

3D INVADERS

Amsoft/Quark Data, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The grand-daddy of them all has been reborn in 3D perspective but is still essentially the same game. Invading aliens are formed in a wave above your laser base and gradually descend the screen towards it.

Your job is to shoot them before they reach the ground or destroy your laser base with their own fire. Your base is placed on a grid to show depth and each horizontal grid line is directly beneath a row of aliens.

G O O D N E W S

- It's a nice cassette cover.

B A D N E W S

- It's slow.
- It's old and unoriginal.
- The graphics and sound are poor.

GRAPHICS	22%
SONICS	18%
GRAB FACTOR	24%
STAYING POWER	19%
A A RATING	20%

S H O O T - E M - U P

SPACE HAWKS

Amsoft/Durell, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Remember those good old days knocking down waves of Galaxians? Well that's what this one's about although it's got some new touches of its own. The waves come in eight varieties and they all bunch together at the top of the screen before some start swooping down towards your base at the bottom.

The aliens can be shot on their way down or in formation, but the latter method releases an indestructible piece of debris which you can shoot at for points or just get out the way. There are eight levels of the eight formations and as things get tougher a space-mine appears which must be avoided. If you shoot it it breaks into four deadly mines.

G O O D N E W S

- Challenging blasting against hordes of enemies.

B A D N E W S

- Single shot firing – timed or rapid fire would be better.
- The overlapping graphics and explosions aren't up to much.

GRAPHICS	46%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	56%
STAYING POWER	44%
A A RATING	49%

S H O O T - E M - U P

LASERWARP

Amsoft/Mikro-Gen, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Conquering the master is the aim of this fast action game and it's done with those familiar left, right and fire controls. There are ten waves of aliens to overcome, each with its own characteristic attack form.

The tenth wave is where you must defeat the master, who sits at the top of the screen behind a shield and moving force-wall. You have to avoid or shoot the constant stream of aliens while trying to shoot through a gap in the force wall so as to chip away at the shield. Not an easy task.

G O O D N E W S

- Smooth colourful graphics.
- Some really tough waves with interesting patterns.

B A D N E W S

- Ten waves may not be enough.
- Collision detection isn't perfect (you'll be grateful though).

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	21%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	52%
A A RATING	54%

S H O O T - E M - U P

THE PRIZE

Amsoft/Arcade Software, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Based on games like *Shamus* and *Berzerk* this one is set in a multi screen maze filled with murderous aliens. Your mission is to get through four levels of maze to the chamber of Midas where some secret is kept.

S H O O T - E M - U P

3D STARSTRIKE

Realtime Games, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is an outstanding vector graphic shoot-out featuring four testing stages on your way to destroying enemy control bases based in hollowed-out moons.

You start in space where your Starstrike ship is being attacked by hordes of enemy craft. You look out through the cockpit with your shield and laser strengths and your laser guns clearly visible.

Surviving this stage will take you to the moon' surface where defensive towers can be blasted, but again can shoot back. Hitting enough tower tops will bring a healthy bonus. Next you're into the equatorial duct (trench) where you have to dodge catwalks and destroy fireballs and wall emplacements.

At the end of the duct you have to shoot two reactor pods, allowing you to escape and see the destruction of the enemy moon. A massive bonus is received for completing the mission. But then it's back out on another harder one.

G O O D N E W S

- Fast, colourful vector graphics.
- Compulsive shoot-'em-up action.
- Four different and taxing stages.



Your ship fires laser bolts and can move in eight directions in search of the code pods that have to be collected in numerical order to take you to the next level. Once collected you go to the base marked B to progress. Other bases are the energy bases and power plants that give you immunity and extra laser bolts respectively.

G O O D N E W S

- Colourful action.
- Difficult fast action.

B A D N E W S

- High frustration factor.
- Blasting robots can get tedious.
- Original it is not.

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	31%
GRAB FACTOR	63%
STAYING POWER	54%
A A RATING	56%

S H O O T - E M - U P

MOON BUGGY

Anirog, £7.95 cass, joystick or keys

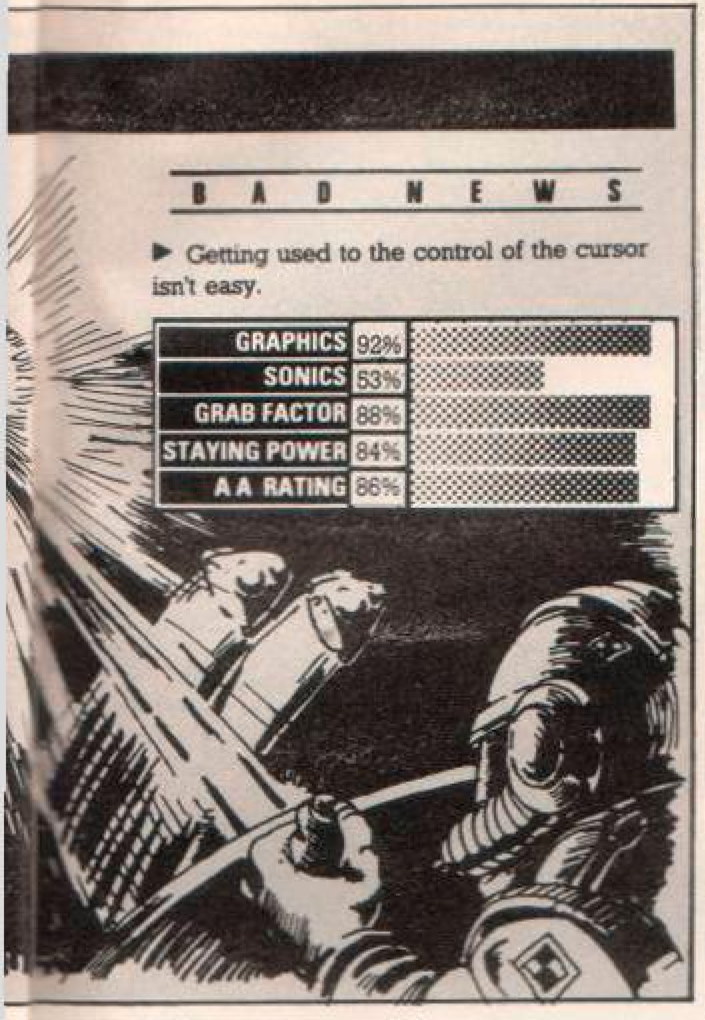
Based on the arcade game *Moon Patrol* this places you in the driving seat of a buggy on the surface of the moon. You have to survive the rigours of the terrain and alien attack.

Your buggy drives left to right with a moonscape in the background. In the first zone you will encounter three types of hazard. On the second another hazard appears an animal that has to be leapt over. From there things just get tougher and tougher.

G O O D N E W S

- Smooth scrolling.

You wanna know how much I get paid for writing these bits?



BAD NEWS

▶ Getting used to the control of the cursor isn't easy.

GRAPHICS	92%
SONICS	53%
GRAB FACTOR	88%
STAYING POWER	84%
A A RATING	86%

▶ Fast reactions needed.
▶ Tough zones are hard to get past.

BAD NEWS

▶ Hardly an original game.
▶ Dying at any stage of a zone sends you back to the start.

GRAPHICS	69%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	65%
A A RATING	67%

GAME-SIMULATION

BRIDGE

Kuma, £8.95 cass, keys only

This game actually allows you to play bridge against a computer opponent who controls the three other players. You play 'South' and start the dealing for the first hand.

After dealing the bidding starts to see which pairing will form a contract for the hand. The computer calculates the points in the hands it is controlling and bids accordingly.

Once the contract is settled you play the hand. If your hand ends up the dummy hand, you play your 'partner's' hand – you don't just have to sit and watch. The play is as normal with the computer automatically playing a card when you have no choice.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Provides much of the tactical skill of bridge.
▶ You actually play the computer - it's not just a card controller for four players.
▶ The bidding and playing appear to be of good standard.

BAD NEWS

▶ Initially complicated if you haven't played bridge.

GRAPHICS	15%
SONICS	7%
GRAB FACTOR	63%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	67%

GAME-SIMULATION

ANIMATED STRIP POKER

Knightsoft, £8.95 cass, keys only

You play for £150 per piece of clothing with the obvious aim being to strip Mindy – not too difficult since she only wears three items of clothing. It's quite a good game of poker with realistically random hands and a reasonable opponent until she starts bluffing. The strip animation wouldn't excite anybody, but then it's the competition that counts, isn't it? Whad-dya mean, it isn't???

GOOD NEWS

▶ Adequate graphics, animation and sound.
▶ Plays reasonable poker.

BAD NEWS

▶ It's appallingly sexist.
▶ Once you've seen it all once, not much incentive to play again.

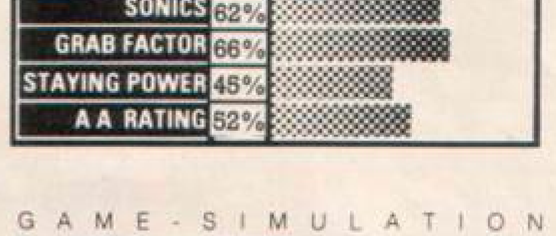
GRAPHICS	63%
SONICS	62%
GRAB FACTOR	66%
STAYING POWER	45%
A A RATING	52%

GAME-SIMULATION

MASTER CHESS

Amsoft/Mikro-Gen, £8.95 cass, keys only

This chess game is for only one player against the computer and has ten levels of play. There is an opening book of six thousand moves and then computer can be interrupted at any time while it's thinking to play its current best move.



You can change the colour of the board and pieces and modify the board to set up problems (or cheat!). You can also load and save games which is handy for the later levels of play where the computer can take some time to respond unless forced.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Plays good chess.
▶ Reaction time can be varied for quick easy games or long tough ones.

BAD NEWS

▶ Very basic graphics.

GRAPHICS	30%
SONICS	5%
GRAB FACTOR	50%
STAYING POWER	70%
A A RATING	60%

GAME-SIMULATION

CUBIT

Amsoft/Mr Micro, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

3D noughts and crosses on a 4x4x4 cube where you have to get a row of four pieces before your opponent does. You can take on another player or the computer, which plays a really tough game.

GOOD NEWS

▶ Absorbing mental challenge.
▶ A formidable computer opponent.

BAD NEWS

▶ Even 3D noughts and crosses will get boring.
▶ Cursor control is a little odd.

GRAPHICS	24%
SONICS	14%
GRAB FACTOR	53%
STAYING POWER	52%
A A RATING	51%

GAME-SIMULATION

ROLAND GOES SQUARE BASHING

Amsoft/Durell, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This curiously-titled game is a 3D puzzle where the old square himself has to make his way around a maze of blocks, eroding each one as he goes so that no blocks remain.

There are 20 layouts of blocks and they weave their way around going under, over and behind each other.

GOOD NEWS

▶ It will take a long time to complete.

BAD NEWS

▶ Bad 3D makes it a matter of trial and error rather than intelligence.
▶ Slow control when changing direction but too fast when moving in a straight line.
▶ One little mistake and you've got to start again.

GRAPHICS	52%
SONICS	53%
GRAB FACTOR	46%
STAYING POWER	25%
A A RATING	30%

P U Z Z L E

XANAGRAMS

Amsoft/Postern, £8.95 cass or free with 464, keys only

This word game is a cross between hangman and a crossword. You have to guess words in a crossword layout one letter at a time.

There is a maximum of five words in a layout which is displayed on screen as dashes. On the right of the screen are all the letters that appear in the words. You have to place the letters in the blanks, scoring points for each succesful choice.

GOOD NEWS

► Can be challenging enough with a wide vocabulary.

BAD NEWS

► A fairly simple game that you may tire of.
► Early guesses of letters are pure luck – a clue would make things more interesting.

GRAPHICS	5%
SONICS	5%
GRAB FACTOR	46%
STAYING POWER	44%
A A RATING	33%

P U Z Z L E

GATECRASHER

Amsoft/Exopal, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

A strategy/thinking game with seven levels of increasing difficulty in which you have to drop barrels through a maze of gates into nine boxes.

The barrels appear at the top of the screen being pushed by a well-animated man. The maze is below, like tunnels in the ground, and can be scrolled up and down to change the layout of the gates. The barrels bounce down through the gates, switching them as they pass, to the boxes at the bottom.

GOOD NEWS

► Requires some brainwork.
► Nice animation on the barrel roller.

BAD NEWS

► Basically a simple game.
► Not enough variation in task.

GRAPHICS	44%
SONICS	32%
GRAB FACTOR	48%
STAYING POWER	43%
A A RATING	45%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

MANIC MINER

Amsoft/Software Projects, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is the nearly originial platform game in which you have to guide Miner Willy through 20 screens of mayhem. Each screen has a number of keys or flashing objects which you have to collect to unlock the exit door.

The robots that bar your path all follow regular patterns and are in such guises as mutant telephones, lavatories and blinking eyes. The platforms you have to make your way around also come in various forms like conveyor belts or collapsing floors.

GOOD NEWS

► Smooth graphics and animation in pleasant four colour mode.
► Addictive platform action.

BAD NEWS

► Music and sound effects may annoy.
► Not very original.

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	41%
GRAB FACTOR	71%
STAYING POWER	61%
A A RATING	64%

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	41%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	62%
A A RATING	64%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

MR WONG'S LOOPY LAUNDRY

Amsoft/Artic, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

You have to get all the laundry down the laundry chute but you can only do it one piece at a time and you've got some crazy equipment after you. The chute is at the top right of the screen with the clothes strewn around the levels that occupy the rest of the screen.

The levels are connected by ladders and completing a screen takes you to a new layout of ladders and clothes. You pick up the clothes by running over them and deposit them one at a time down the chute. When you move you continue in that direction until you hit something or change direction.

On the first screen an iron and soap suds are after you and later a bag of washing also starts in pursuit. They are all fatal to touch and tend to home in on you trying to trap you in a dead end. You do have some starch to freeze them but it is a limited supply and refills don't appear for very long for you to pick them up.

GOOD NEWS

► A careful eye and fast action required to avoid getting trapped.

BAD NEWS

► Simple task becomes repetitive.

GRAPHICS	45%
SONICS	40%
GRAB FACTOR	58%
STAYING POWER	49%
A A RATING	52%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

CHUCKIE EGG

A'n'F, £7.90 cass, joystick or keys

This classic platform game has 256 levels of increasing difficulty which are liable to make the sanest person crack. All you have to do is collect eggs in the farmyard – a nice peaceful country occupation – but this one will keep you coming back in sheer eggsasperation at its addictiveness.

Each screen is formed of platforms, ladders and sometimes a lift system, where twelve eggs and piles of corn are left lying around. You play a little fat guy who has to pick up all the eggs and get the corn for bonuses. You can walk around jumping gaps and bouncing off walls but have to avoid the three dangers that inhabit the hen house.

GOOD NEWS

► Plenty of levels.
► Addictive gameplay that is easy to get used to but tough to master.
► Some well-designed screens with tough egg positioning.

BAD NEWS

► Simple graphics and sound.
► No variety in what you have to do.

GRAPHICS	42%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	83%
STAYING POWER	79%
A A RATING	78%



P L A T F O R M - G A M E

SIR LANCELOT

Melbourne House, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

This is a 24 screen platform game of the "collect the keys" variety. As the gallant Sir Lancelot you start on a screen where there are 23 magic items. When you walk into them they transport you to another room.

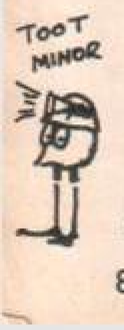
In each subsidiary room there are several flashing objects you must collect. These are placed around mazes, platforms, monsters and other devious locations. On each screen there is usually only one possible route to get each item and this always involves good timing and fast reactions.

GOOD NEWS

► Enough tough rooms to keep you busy.
► Addictive platform action.
► Access to any of the 24 screens.

BAD NEWS

► Not much game sound.



TWO OCEAN/ IMAGINE GAMES FREE!

What an offer!

Unbelievable!

Amazing!

OK, so you're not into special offers. Seen it all before. And besides, it's so much effort getting out that cheque book.

Fair enough, don't read any further and you won't ever know what you missed. I mean it's only a couple of free Ocean and Imagine games we're talking about here. A mere £17.90 worth of state-of-the-art software for nothing. Not worth a second look.

Well, just in case you are a teensy-weensy bit interested let me tell you some you some more. The thing is, we want you to subscribe to this magazine. It makes for a more permanent relationship. We don't lose sight of you just because some bone-headed newsagent didn't order enough stock one month. And you don't have to go trudging the streets in search of a copy, it just plops gently onto your doormat.

Very nice, of course, but wouldn't it be even nicer if you could also have a parcel plop onto the doormat containing two Ocean/Imagine games of your choice? A quick glance round this page should show you just how nice that would in fact be. Pretty nifty software, eh?

Well, that's exactly what will happen if you take out a 12-month subscription to Amstrad Action – two games of your choice, selected from the range on this page, will be sent to you completely free. Isn't it am-m-mazing?? They're actually worth more than the subscription!!

The kind-hearted (chainsaw-weilding) bosses who run this magazine swear blind to me that there's absolutely no catch. Just send us the completed form on this page together with your subscription fee of £15.50 (includes postage and packing) and we'll rush the games to you straightaway and make sure you receive, hot off the press, the next 12 issues of the most exciting, it says here, publication in the known universe. Yeah! Go for it!!

Blurb Writer



MATCHDAY

NEW!

I'm over the moon about this one, Brian. Great soccer action on your micro to celebrate the start of the season. You can play your team against the computer or another player. Features dribbling, passing, shooting, goalkeeper saves, etc. but no kissing.

Don't miss the Action!

Who writes these headlines, anyway? I think the idea of this particular paragraph is to explain to you that Amstrad Action is such an amazing publication that you ought to be subscribing to it even without the extra inducement of those free games.

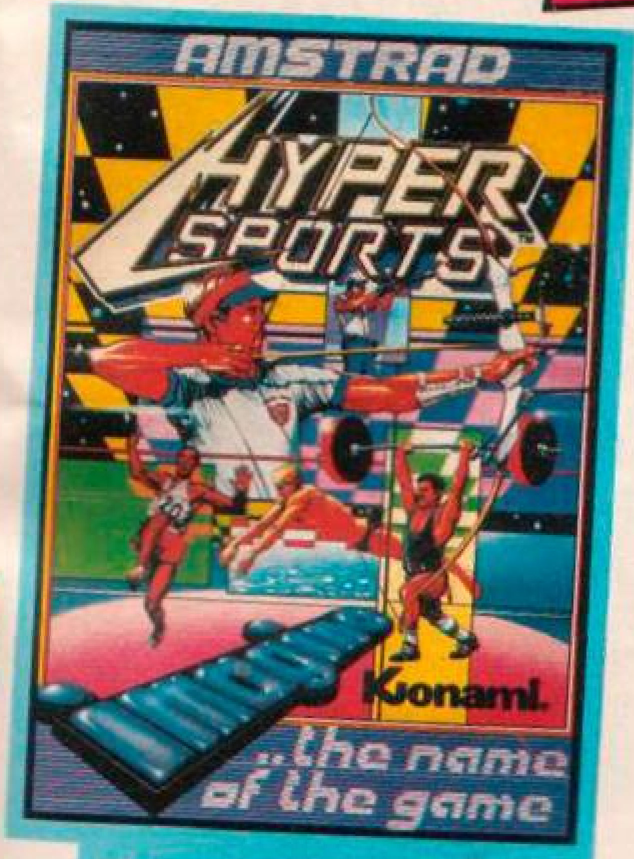
I'm supposed to point out things like that the reviews we print are completely unequalled, both because they're actually independent, and because they're just so detailed and punchy and informative and witty and so forth.

Also things like these special offers we keep doing which allow you to pick up software at u-n-b-e-l-i-e-v-a-b-l-e prices, Nigel. And the playing tips, and the adventure section and the features and the pretty little pictures and Toot and me and so on.

But the way I see it, why bother to point all this out to you when you can just look through the magazine and realise for yourself that we have just GOT to stick together over the next 12 months? Go on, let's do it!

B.W

Your choice of software worth, gasp!, £17.90 when you subscribe to Amstrad Action





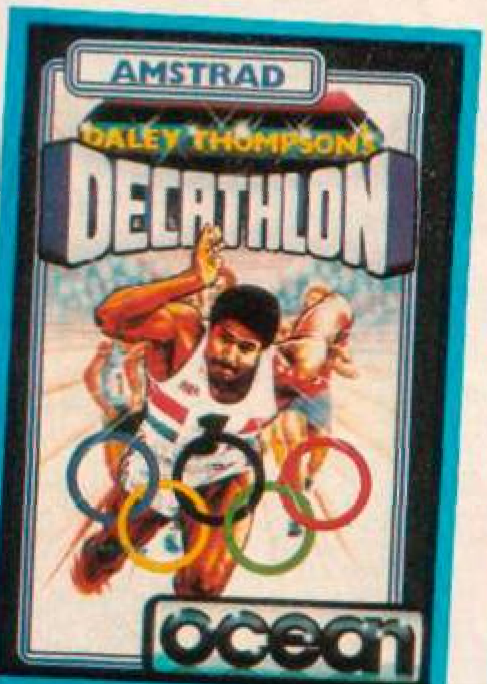
Choose any two of these games!

HUNCHBACK 2

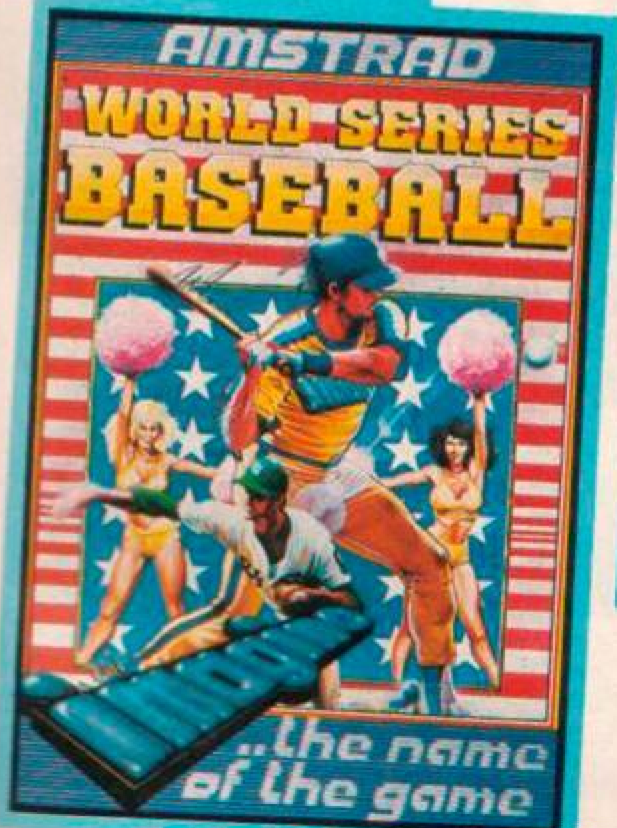
This follow-up is about a hundred times better than the original Amsoft *Hunchback*. Four screens of extremely difficult, addictive action, pleasing graphics and some excellent music.

HYPERSPORTS **NEW!**

This is no less than the official, licensed version of the great Konami arcade smash *Track and Field 2*. Six skillful new events to master: weight-lifting, triple jump, clay-pigeon shooting, archery, swimming and gymnastics. At last you can turn yourself into a sporting hero without pumping your life-savings into a coin-op machine.







DALEY THOMPSON's DECATHLON

The Amstrad version of this top-selling Ocean title is far better than those on the Commodore 64 and Spectrum – excellent graphics and animation. Ten joystick-waggling events for you to power your way through in constant search of better times and longer distances. My arm's still aching.

KONG STRIKES BACK

Another arcade classic, this, as you have to make your way through twisted fairground machinery dodging cars, rocking horses and a fair few other things in your bid to rescue the beautiful maiden in the clutches of the gorilla. It's entertaining, it's addictive, and, as far as I'm concerned, it's impossible.

WORLD SERIES BASEBALL **NEW!**

I hate to say it, but this Yankee sport makes for an excellent computer game. You have to learn the different skills of pitching, batting and fielding, not forgetting the jolly un-cricketing technique of stealing bases. Great fun either played against the computer or another player, especially if you're munching popcorn at the same time.

AMSTRAD ACTION SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Yes, I guess this is one special offer I can't afford to pass over. Please rush me the two games I've circled below. And put me down for a 12-month subscription to the magazine.

Name ....

Address..

The games I want are (circle TWO): Hypersports; World Series Baseball; Matchday; Hunchback 2; Kong Strikes Back; DT's Decathlon

I enclose a cheque or postal order for £15.50 made out to Future Publishing

Post this form to **Subscription Offer, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS**

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

THE SCOUT STEPS OUT

Amsoft/HR Software, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

The scout is dressed in woggle, baggy shorts and silly hat in a very novel game at a scout camp. His task is pretty difficult to pin down (what ARE scouts for?) but he has to collect badges, mushrooms and seaweed amongst other things from the screens that surround his camp.

He starts with all his mates enjoying some camp fire music where he stocks up on cornflakes to give him a maximum nine lives. From there he has to follow an arrow off screen to the start of his journey. The arrows and ladders lead him to a succession of platform type screens full of interesting effects.

There are of course posses of anti-scouting creatures after him and while some travel in patterns others home in on his presence. The sea screens have an interesting effect whereby you float to the surface unless you can cling to some weed or a chain.

You can return to the cornflake bowl to build up your lives but on hard screens it is easy to lose them very fast.

G O O D   N E W S

- Distinctive and attractive screens and animation.
- Good music on start screen and sound effects.
- Interesting platform variant.
- Great sense of humour.

B A D   N E W S

- Control can be fiddly.

GRAPHICS	75%
SONICS	72%
GRAB FACTOR	78%
STAYING POWER	77%
A A RATING	77%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

SHORT'S FUSE

Firebird/Dollarsoft, £2.50 cass, joystick or keys

An appropriately named game because the frustration factor may well put your temper on a short fuse. It is a platform game in which you have to collect the plunger-like detonators before a bomb can blow up a famous monument.

You start at the Taj Mahal where a number of detonators are dotted around the plan of the building. There is a bomb with a fuse fizzing and you have nine seconds to reach each detonator after getting the previous one. If time runs out or you jump into thin air you lose a life and have to start with all the detonators back in place again.

There are five different sites including Big Ben and the Eiffel Tower and each one has a different layout of platforms, ropes and hazards. The screens consist mainly of solid platforms, dissolving floors, deadly spiked floors and a moving lift. Your character has to jump about with remarkable speed to get to all the detonators.

A code will access each of the five screens or you can try to play through all of them. The jumping control is incredibly sensitive which means you need to be constantly aware of where you're going to jump to and that you don't hold the fire button down.

G O O D   N E W S

- Good detail on buildings.
- Good reactions and fast movement needed.

B A D   N E W S

- Little use of colour.
- Frustrating gameplay.
- Not very many screens.

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	30%
GRAB FACTOR	41%
STAYING POWER	65%
A A RATING	62%

P L A T F O R M - G A M E

GHOULS

Micro Power, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

There are only four screens to this platform game but it is much faster than games like *Manic Miner* with each screen being diabolically difficult to complete. On each screen you have to get your *Pacman*-like ghoul to the top right of the screen, gobbling dots and power jewels as you go.

Movement is very fast which makes jumping over objects a matter for great precision. This combined with the fact that it's very easy to get killed means you're likely to get through a lot of games very quickly.

The first problem is that it is very easy to mistime a jump off the edge of a platform, while falling from even quite low heights can prove fatal. This is nothing, though, compared to the difficulty of timing leaps over such horrors as spiky mats, which may cause you endless frustration. Another hazard is a ghost that slowly homes in on you but can be disabled for a while by getting a power jewel. Other features are moving platforms, expanding walkways, bouncing spiders and springs to propel you up floors.

There is a time limit for each screen which is converted into a bonus if you complete the screen, or kills you if it runs out. If you can complete all four screens you get a bonus life but just doing one is achievement enough.

G O O D   N E W S

- **Fast reflex action.**
- **Extremely tough screens.**
- **Good sound effects.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Incredibly frustrating.**
- **Not many screens.**
- **Timing is very difficult.**

GRAPHICS	62%
SONICS	63%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	67%
A A RATING	66%

W A R - G A M E

JOHNNY REB

Lothlorien, £6.95 cass, keys only

Against a backdrop of bitter civil war two Union and Confederate forces meet across a river divided battlefield in a fight to capture the opposition's flag.

You can be either side and can set a time limit on the length of the game if you wish. Otherwise you fight until one side is destroyed. You have three types of unit: infantry, cavalry and artillery and you can have up to 20 of each.

The units will be positioned on a map which will also have a river running vertically with a bridge across it and areas of marshland and forest where the units cannot go.

G O O D   N E W S

- **Variability in game time and complexity.**

B A D   N E W S

- **A war of attrition rather than tactical skills.**
- **Simple graphics and sound.**

GRAPHICS	28%
SONICS	12%
GRAB FACTOR	55%
STAYING POWER	52%
A A RATING	52%

W A R - G A M E

REDCOATS

Lothlorien, £6.95 cass, keys only

Set in the American war of independence this war-game recreates five battles from that time or lets you create your own. Each battle is between the redcoated British and the bluecoated yankee upstarts.

Each battleground is a single screen on which appear four types of unit for either side and three types of terrain.

G O O D   N E W S

- **Different battle scenarios and editing screen.**
- **One of the easier war-games to play.**

B A D   N E W S

- **Battles are too uncomplicated.**
- **Graphics aren't very good.**

GRAPHICS	36%
SONICS	12%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	41%
A A RATING	45%

W A R - G A M E

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Lothlorien, £6.95 cass, keys only

Towards the end of WW II you are given the job of leading a squad of four other men in a hazardous raid on a complex deep in enemy territory where a devastating weapon is being developed. Your first task is to choose your exact objective of the seven available. Then select your team and the skills they should possess.

Once at the complex they may only have to photograph it or at the hardest level penetrate its underground tunnels and discov-

See you again next month

er the secrets of the weapon. Once your mission is complete you have to make it to an airplane that lifts you to safety.

G O O D N E W S

► Plenty of variety of task and problems.
► Novel idea of skill use and game objectives.

B A D N E W S

► Crude stickman graphics and displays.
► Too much emphasis on fighting patrols rather than thinking.

GRAPHICS	34%
SONICS	8%
GRAB FACTOR	64%
STAYING POWER	69%
A A RATING	65%

W A R - G A M E

BATTLE FOR MIDWAY

PSS, £9.95 cass, joystick with keys only

You can recreate this famous Pacific air and naval battle from the second world war and probably manage to change the final outcome. You control five basic units, two aircraft carrier forces, two search units and the island of Midway itself. The Japanese are the opponents and control three fleets of ships.

Attacks are shown on screen where you can use a deck gun to shoot aircraft if you wish. Naval attacks are also shown on screen but are always disastrous for the US forces.

G O O D N E W S

► Accurate reproduction of events.
► Quick thinking and command needed.
► Different levels of play and speed alter the tactics required.

B A D N E W S

► Not too difficult to win.
► The Japanese are slightly too predictable.

GRAPHICS	56%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	57%
A A RATING	59%

W A R - G A M E

WAR ZONE

CCS, £6.95 cass, keys only

A battle is about to take place on a nine sector area composed of 900 grid squares. Your force of between 15 and 150 units has to take on the computer's identical power in a fight for supremacy.

The screen can display any sector with your forces in it and this shows the terrain features of plainland, hills, roads, woodland and minefields. These affect the movement potential of your units and also their ability to attack. Artillery and tank units can fire at enemy units in range and out of cover while infantry units can move fast and engage adjacent units.

G O O D N E W S

► Long tactical battles are possible.
► Instructions and options are limited to necessities.

B A D N E W S

► The computer's turn can leave you with long periods with nothing to do.
► More knowledge of units fighting strength would be nice.

GRAPHICS	41%
SONICS	17%
GRAB FACTOR	59%
STAYING POWER	60%
A A RATING	57%

P I L O T I N G - S I M U L A T O R

FLIGHT PATH 737

Anirog, £6.95 cass, joystick or keys

You're at the controls of a commercial airliner and your task is to safely take off, cross a mountain range and land on the other side. The display shows your cockpit view of the horizon at the top of the screen and your instrumentation at the bottom.

On higher levels you also have to contend with shorter runways, crosswinds and engine fires which have to be put out. You only have enough fuel for one attempt at a landing so even the lowest level of play can be tough. If you crash you are told why but a succesful landing will bring a points score to indicate how well you did.

G O O D N E W S

► Calls for perfection in your flying.
► A lot to do in a short time.

B A D N E W S

► Trying to achieve perfection can be unnecessarily frustrating.
► Screen update is slow.
► Horizon doesn't tilt.

GRAPHICS	46%
SONICS	36%
GRAB FACTOR	53%
STAYING POWER	45%
A A RATING	47%

P I L O T I N G - S I M U L A T O R

MYRDDIN FLIGHT SIMULATION

Myrddin Software, £11.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

This simulator is different to others in that the aim of flying isn't to shoot things down but to scout the landscape in search of some three dimensional geometric shapes in different colours.

The display is split into two halves, the top one showing the cockpit view in all yellow and the bottom one your instrumentation. You are flying a Dingbat, which can be one of 16 skill levels, on a large mapped area (a chart is provided with the game).

G O O D N E W S

► 3D vector graphic shapes in several colours.
► Reverse flying option allowing you to turn 180 degrees instantly.

B A D N E W S

► Screen update is slow.
► Once you've sussed landing and seen the objects, it may pall.
► The price.

GRAPHICS	67%
SONICS	24%
GRAB FACTOR	69%
STAYING POWER	53%
A A RATING	58%

P I L O T I N G - S I M U L A T O R

HUNTER KILLER

Amsoft/Protek, £8.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

Set during the Second World War, this submarine simulation faces you with the task of patrolling an area of sea in your S type submarine and sinking any German subs you find there. You play using three basic screens, two showing your instruments and charts and one your periscope view.

When you access the periscope view this is

P I L O T I N G - S I M U L A T O R

COMBAT LYNX

Durell, £8.95 cass, joystick with keys or keys

You're in charge of a Lynx helicopter and your job in this simulator is to protect your bases and yourself against enemy attack by air and land. Your view is from outside the copter but with full instrumentation and a bit more besides.

You start at base one where you can equip your craft with six types of weaponry on a rotating wire-frame drawing. When ready you can take off and start to move over the scrolling 3D landscape. Contours show the undulations of the ground, which is dotted with houses, trees and military vehicles.

The play area is an enormous map and if you access it it will show up enemy and friendly units. There are several types of unit: fighters who are fast and deadly, helicopters like yourself, tanks, lorries and gun emplacements.

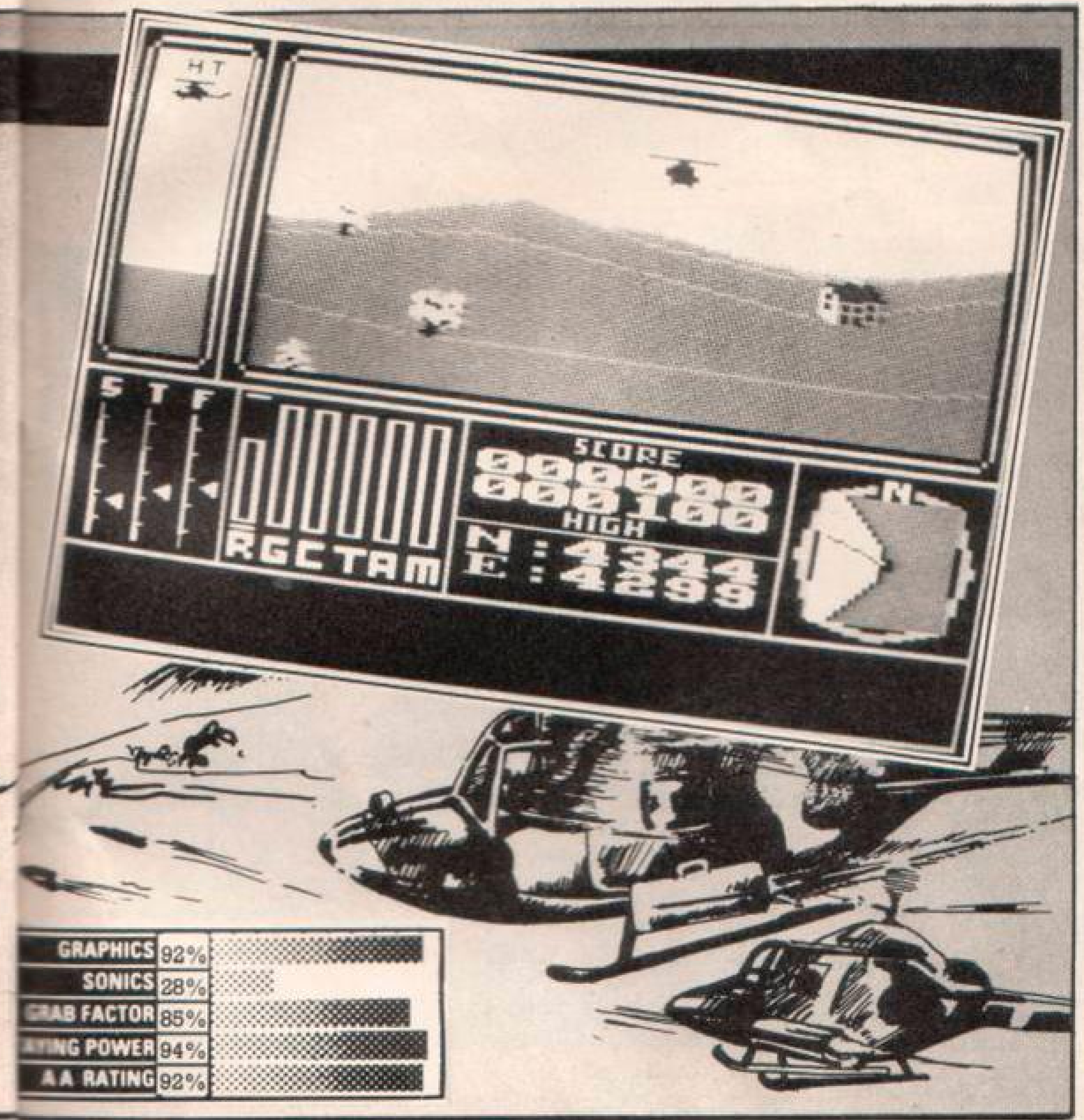
Your six weapons are suitable for different targets but trips to base to rearm and refuel are often necessary. The chopper is equipped with height, speed, temperature, fuel and compass gauges plus facilities for computer readouts on bases.

G O O D N E W S

► Brilliant 3D graphics.
► Enormous playing area.
► Difficult task, satisfying when you improve.
► Terrific range of options and details.

B A D N E W S

► Might be too complicated to start with.



GRAPHICS	92%	
SONICS	28%	
GRAB FACTOR	85%	
STAYING POWER	94%	
AA RATING	92%	



where the action takes place since you have to get the target sub directly ahead of you and on a collision course with any torpedoes you launch. You face danger from the other sub, coastal mines, spotter planes with depth charges and destroyers.

G O O D N E W S

- **Plenty to do as you control the sub.**
- **Not an easy game, but rewarding if you sink something.**

B A D N E W S

- **Confusing trying to watch several gauges at once on separate screens.**
- **Only one type of vessel to sink.**

GRAPHICS	48%	
SONICS	18%	
GRAB FACTOR	41%	
STAYING POWER	52%	
AA RATING	47%	

P I L O T I N G - S I M U L A T O R

JUMP JET

Anirog, £9.95 cass, £13.95 disk, joystick with keys or keys

This game was written by an ex-Harrier jump-jet pilot and puts you at the controls of the jet on board a naval carrier. Your mission is to track and destroy enemy aircraft with missiles before they destroy you.

The bottom half of the screen always shows your instrument readouts of radar, altitude, heading, fuel, time, artificial horizon, power, speed, missiles, undercarriage, flaps and vertical take off nozzles. The top half starts as an overhead view of your plane on the deck landing pad and once in the air switches to a side on view of you over the carrier.

Clear of the carrier the view changes to the sea with waves breaking and clouds overhead. An enemy plane appears on the radar and you have to lock onto him until he is in sight and then bring him down with a missile before he gets too close and downs you.

G O O D N E W S

- **Difficult missions calling for precision flying.**
- **Good instrumentation and graphic displays.**

B A D N E W S

- **No tilt on horizon when you turn.**
- **When enemy is in sight you can't break away and there often isn't time to get him in your sights before you are destroyed.**
- **I couldn't hear the speech claimed on the cassette cover.**

GRAPHICS	55%	
SONICS	56%	
GRAB FACTOR	62%	
STAYING POWER	60%	
AA RATING	59%	

E X P L O R A T I O N

JET SET WILLY

Software Projects, £8.95 cass, joystick or keys

Miner Willy first appeared in *Manic Miner*, a platform game, and has graduated to a multi-screen game in which he has the familiar task of collecting objects from a host of flick-screen rooms.

The graphics are the same as in other machine versions, while the sound is comprised of an annoying jumping noise and a good little tune. Unlike other machines we don't have the annoyance of two versions of what is a classic game – just one great game.

G O O D N E W S

- **Very large playing area.**
- **Plenty of objects to collect.**
- **Some well designed, fiendish screens.**
- **Compulsive exploration gameplay.**

B A D N E W S

- **Horrible jumping noise.**
- **The graphics haven't been improved from other machine versions.**

GRAPHICS	56%	
SONICS	67%	
GRAB FACTOR	85%	
STAYING POWER	87%	
AA RATING	85%	

A R C A D E - A C T I O N

KILLER GORILLA/ GAUNTLET

Micro Power, £9.95 cass, joystick or keys

A compilation of two classic arcade games *Donkey Kong* and *Defender*, one a platform game and the other a shoot-em-up, so we put them in arcade action as a compromise. Both test your reflexes to the utmost and as a package represent great value for money.

Killer Gorilla has four screens in which your girlfriend has been kidnapped by an nasty ape and you have to climb to the top of the screen to rescue her. Each screen is composed of girders, ladders, lifts and conveyor belts which are made hazardous not only by the threat of falling to your death but also by the things that the gorilla sends to stop you. Barrels and fireballs have to be avoided or smashed with a hammer which you can jump and pick up.

G O O D N E W S

- **Two games for the price of one (and a bit).**
- ***Gauntlet* is better than *Defend or Die*.**
- **Both games have slick graphics.**
- **Testing platform action.**
- **Fast and furious blasting action.**

B A D N E W S

- **No prizes for originality.**

GRAPHICS	85%	
SONICS	57%	
GRAB FACTOR	87%	
STAYING POWER	88%	
AA RATING	87%	

Beyond belief!

Shadowfire and Spy v Spy at half price!



Now here's something to get excited about. In the second half of September two games are being released which look set to equal just about anything yet available on the Amstrad.

SHADOWFIRE and SPY V SPY have already been highly acclaimed on the Commodore 64 and Spectrum, and all the signs are that the Amstrad versions will be just as good, if not better.

We're so excited about the arrival of these games we couldn't resist the idea of making them available to readers of Amstrad Action at a price which, frankly, could give our bank manager a hernia.

Just this once, dear, lucky reader, you can have these remarkable games (which are worth every penny of their normal retail price of £9.95) for the sum of, wait for it, £5.95 each, or, still more incredible, £9.95 the pair. That covers everything – VAT, postage, packing, the lot.

Once you've picked yourself up off the floor, why not send off now and you'll get the progs immediately they're released. We doubt you'll pick up a better buy this year.

UNIQUE HIGH SCORE CONTEST

Now at last you can PROVE that you're one of the most skilful Arnold-owners in the country by getting your name printed in Amstrad Action.

Basically you just use the form opposite to register your high-scores on the games you're best at, making sure you fill in all the relevant details to help convince us your claim is true. From next issue on we'll print the top scores on each game we get significant entries for.

Of course the problem with high score tables is sifting out the cheats. So just in case any Amstrad user isn't as honest, clean, morally upright, etc, as the rest of us, we've worked out a unique system whereby you the readers can challenge any score you believe to be inflated. Furious arguments are likely to ensue, reported in voyeuristic detail on our high-score page. You'll love it.

More details on this next month – but woe betide anyone caught exaggerating.

CREATE YOUR OWN CHARTS

Everyone is interested to know about other people's raves, so we're proud to inaugaurate the first nationwide Amstrad-owners' charts – the ones YOU create.

The forms opposite allow you to vote for your favourite games or serious programs, thereby helping them to receive national recognition in these pages.

You have a total of ten votes at your disposal for each chart and can allocate them any way you wish. For example, you can splash all ten votes on a single program, or you can spread them across up to five different games. The idea behind this is to end up with charts which reflect your preferences as closely as possible. Most other systems give an unfair advantage to programs which have sold well but are only moderately liked.

The difference between our two charts is that the Games chart will cover any program intended purely for entertainment (including adventures, strategy games, puzzles, etc), the Serious Software chart will cover any program which has a serious use (business progs, utilities, graphics creators, etc). In the case of 99 per cent of software it should be obvious which category it belongs in.

Get the idea? Then like the politician said, don't waste your vote.



THE ALL IN-ONE ACTION ENTRY FORM

Fill in as much of the page as you wish. Then cut out the ENTIRE page (even if you've only filled in parts of it) and post it to: **Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7PS.**

IMPORTANT
Don't forget to fill in this bit!

Name ____________________

Age ____________________

Address ____________________

____

Telephone number ____________________

Shadowfire/Spy v Spy offer form

Yes please, I would like (please circle your choice):

Shadowfire at £5.95

Spy v Spy at £5.95

Both games for £9.95

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High-score entry

I would like to register my high-scores in the following Amstrad games:

	GAME	SCORE	TIME TAKEN	LEVEL REACHED
1.				
2.				
3.				

I promise these are genuine scores achieved without using cheat methods.
Signed

Game chart voting form

I would like to vote for the following game(s):

	GAME	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Total number of votes = 10

Serious software voting form

I would like to vote for the following piece(s) of 'serious software':

	PROGRAM	SOFTWARE HOUSE	NO. OF VOTES
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Total number of votes = 10

THE AA QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear, sweet, kind reader. You can do us and yourself a great favour by giving you careful consideration to this questionnaire. We want as many people as possible to return them to us, so that we know exactly what YOUR thoughts are on this first issue – it should help us make future Amstrad Actions even better.

Go on, flood us with paper. Oh, and don't forget to fill in your name, age, address, and phone number on the other side of the page.



On multiple-choice questions please just circle the relevant letter.

1. How did you first come to know about Amstrad Action?
 a) Saw an advertisement in Amstrad Computer User.
 b) By word of mouth.
 c) Just noticed it on the newsstand.
 d) Other (please specify)

2. Please give a rating from 0-10 for each of the following regular magazine features according to how much you like them.
 Ed lines (editorial page)...
 Amscene (news, gossip)...
 Action Test (game reviews)...
 Biz Progs (business software)...
 Plug-ins (add-ons)...
 Adventure...
 Cheat mode (playing tips)...
 Competitions...
 Toot (the margin character)...



3. Which of the above would you like given MORE space?

4. Which of the above would you like given LESS space?

5. Please give a rating from 0-10 for each of the following "one-off" features:
 Cover + page 3
 Talking Amstrad (p12)...
 Amsoft interview (p32)...
 Amsyclopedia...
 Dun Darach map (p96)...

6. Do you feel the magazine is (a) over-priced, (b) under-priced or (c) about right?

7. Looking at our system for reviewing games, please TICK any of the following points you particularly like and put a CROSS next to any you dislike.
 The way we label many screen-photographs
 The summary of games under Good news/Bad news.
 The headings Graphics, Sonics, Grab Factor, and Staying Power.
 The fact that we use percentages to rate a game.
 The fact that we use tinted bars to give a visual indication of the percentage.
 The presence of a 'Second Opinion' comment.
 The overall 'look' of the Action Test pages.



8. In cases where you were familiar with a program reviewed, how often did you basically agree with our verdict?
 a)Always b)Almost always c)Most of the time d)Only some of the time e)Hardly ever f)Never

9. How could our reviews be further improved?

10. Please put a tick by any of the following features you would like to see introduced to Amstrad Action, a cross by any you would NOT like introduced.
 Type-in game program listings
 Type-in utility listings
 Articles on programming in Basic
 Articles on programming in machine code
 Reviews of educational software
 Amstrad book reviews
 A cartoon strip
 A games high score table
 Readers charts for games software
 Readers charts for business software
 Other



11. Do you have any comment on the overall 'tone' of the magazine?

12. Now about you. Which of the following most closely describes you?
 a)You own an Amstrad.
 b)Someone else in your family owns an Amstrad.
 c)You have regular access to a friend's Amstrad.
 d)You don't have access to an Amstrad but are thinking of getting one.
 e)You don't have access to an Amstrad and aren't thinking of getting one.

13. Which Amstrad model (and type of monitor) do you usually use?

14. Circle any of the following add-ons you have regular access to
 Extra disk-drive Printer Joystick Modem Serial interface Light pen Speech synthesizer Sideways Rom TV modulator Other

15. Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make on the magazine (please send a separate letter if you wish!)?

WIN £50 OF SOFTWARE!

All the completed questionnaires returned to us by the end of September will be placed in the boot of the publisher's clapped out Ford Fiesta and taken for a bone-shaking spin round Somerton's beauty spots (both of them). Having thus been thoroughly shaken up, THREE questionnaires will be selected and their owners will each be asked to choose themselves, gasp!, £50 worth of software at our expense. You've got to admit, that's better than a slap across the belly with a wet cod-fish. Standby for the results in two issues' time.

Needless to say, the winners will be selected without WITHOUT referring to any opinions they may have expressed on the questionnaire. You must give us your HONEST opinion.

Incidentally, if you prefer not to send in this actual page, a copy will do fine – but only one questionnaire per person will be admitted.

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AIRWOLF

Amsoft/Elite, £8.95 cass, joystick only

People don't dream about driving trains any more but about flying helicopters. Here you've got the chance to play Stringfellow Hawke of TV prog fame. You pilot a chopper which is very sensitive to control as you try to manoeuvre inside an underground cavern complex that scrolls as you move between screens.

Your job is to rescue five trapped scientists by destroying the defence control boxes positioned around the caves. The boxes are small cubes with a little blue button on top which disappears when shot. This will open up another area of the cave for you unless you've shot a dummy box or done them in the wrong order.

Not much is given away about what you have to do but this does make the joy of discovery even greater when you work out part of your task. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that your time runs out extremely fast and you're not told how to give yourself more (I'm told there is a way).

The caves are packed with hazards that call for very tight control of your chopper as well furious concentration. Gravity constantly pulls you down so you have to keep pushing up on the joystick to stay airborne, although when you move left or right you automatically maintain height. You have seven shields that are gradually bumped away when you hit things and can't be replaced. Some collisions prove instantly fatal if you're caught on the turn or hit a nasty defence device.

The hazards are numerous and at first all too easy to hit. Light blue walls can be shot through but this has no effect on the rest of the robotic inhabitants. These include rotating radar towers, robots that look like satellites, moving poles with a charged ring around them, rockets blasting flames, electric barriers and even a remote control camera.

As you get better at control it is possible to get past all these hazards but it may take a very long while before you can crack this game (I didn't).

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Colourful and detailed graphics including a nice helicopter.**
- **A really hard task calling for great movement precision.**
- **Nice (at first) rendition of theme music.**
- **Some imaginative, if diabolical, hazards.**
- **Great joystick sensitivity practice.**

BAD NEWS

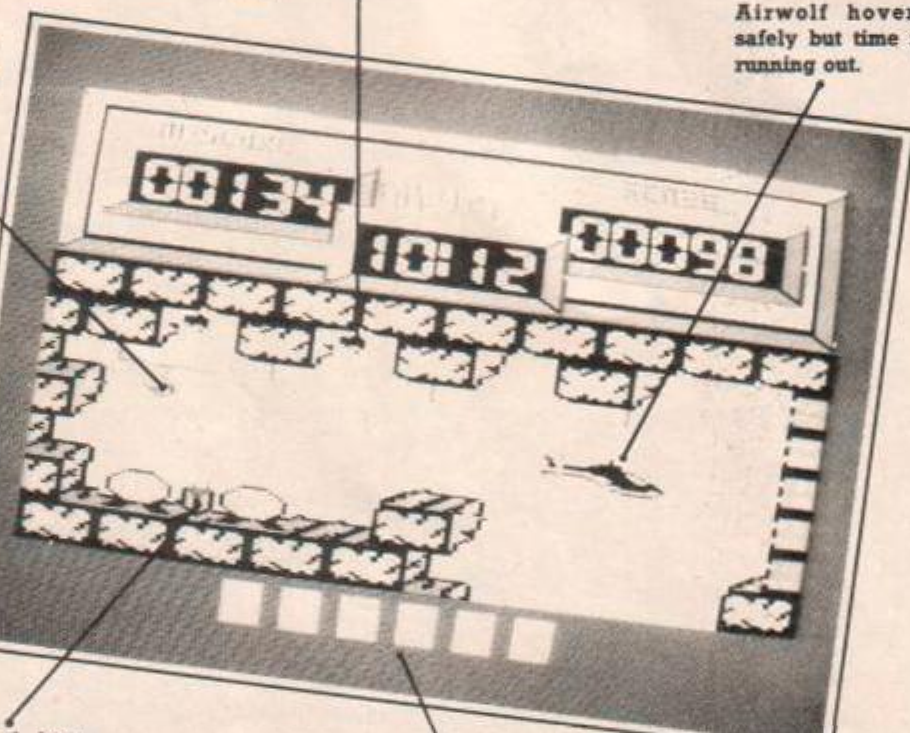
- **Control and frustration factor may be too much to stand.**
- **If you do get impossibly stuck, may not be rewarding.**
- **There aren't that many screens.**

GRAPHICS	83%
SONICS	67%
GRAB FACTOR	68%
STAYING POWER	85%
A A RATING	78%

SECOND OPINION

Graphics were very impressive in their coulourful chunkiness, but the music was maddening after a bit. So was the game. Control is exceptionally difficult and the puzzles are fiendish. You won't get very far to begin with, but you'll probably be back for more.

PC



Avoid these radar scanners, they're fatal.

Airwolf hovers safely but time is running out.

The security camera patrols along the bar.

The control box nestles between two spheres and has to be bombed from above.

Your shields are gone – the next bump will kill you.

DUN DARACH

Gargoyle Games, £9.95 cass, keys only

The secret and ancient city of Dun Darach is the setting for Cuchulainn the Great's first adventure on the Amstrad. You can see from our detailed map overleaf of the maze of streets, shops and houses that the city is full of places to explore and jobs to be done.

Your task is to rescue your charioteer Loeg who has been captured by the sorceress Skar and imprisoned in the city. Along the way there are many things to be done – if you can take your eyes off the amazing animation of Cuchulainn and the other characters.

The top half of the screen shows you and one side of a city street with a compass to indicate direction, while the bottom half shows what money and possessions you have. The picture scrolls left or right as you move, but if you want to change direction to move 'into' or 'out of' the screen at one of the many intersections, you must first press a key to change the view of the scene by 90 degrees. At first this is confusing – but our map could help.

As Cuchulainn moves his hair flaps in the breeze and his walking action is wonderfully animated. You're told what area of the city you're in as well as all having the streets and shops named and the houses numbered. You can enter buildings where you may be able to buy, sell or store objects, gamble or make important discoveries.

The other inhabitants of the city appear as two basic male or female characters with a code letter to indicate their identity. Some may help you in obtaining objects or information while others may rob you of your possessions. There is even a little rat that scurries around – fortunately you can't pick it up.

BW

GOOD NEWS

- **Brilliant animation of all characters.**
- **Large city playing area including shops and houses.**
- **Lots to do.**
- **Terrific atmosphere.**
- **Nice packaging and instructions.**

BAD NEWS

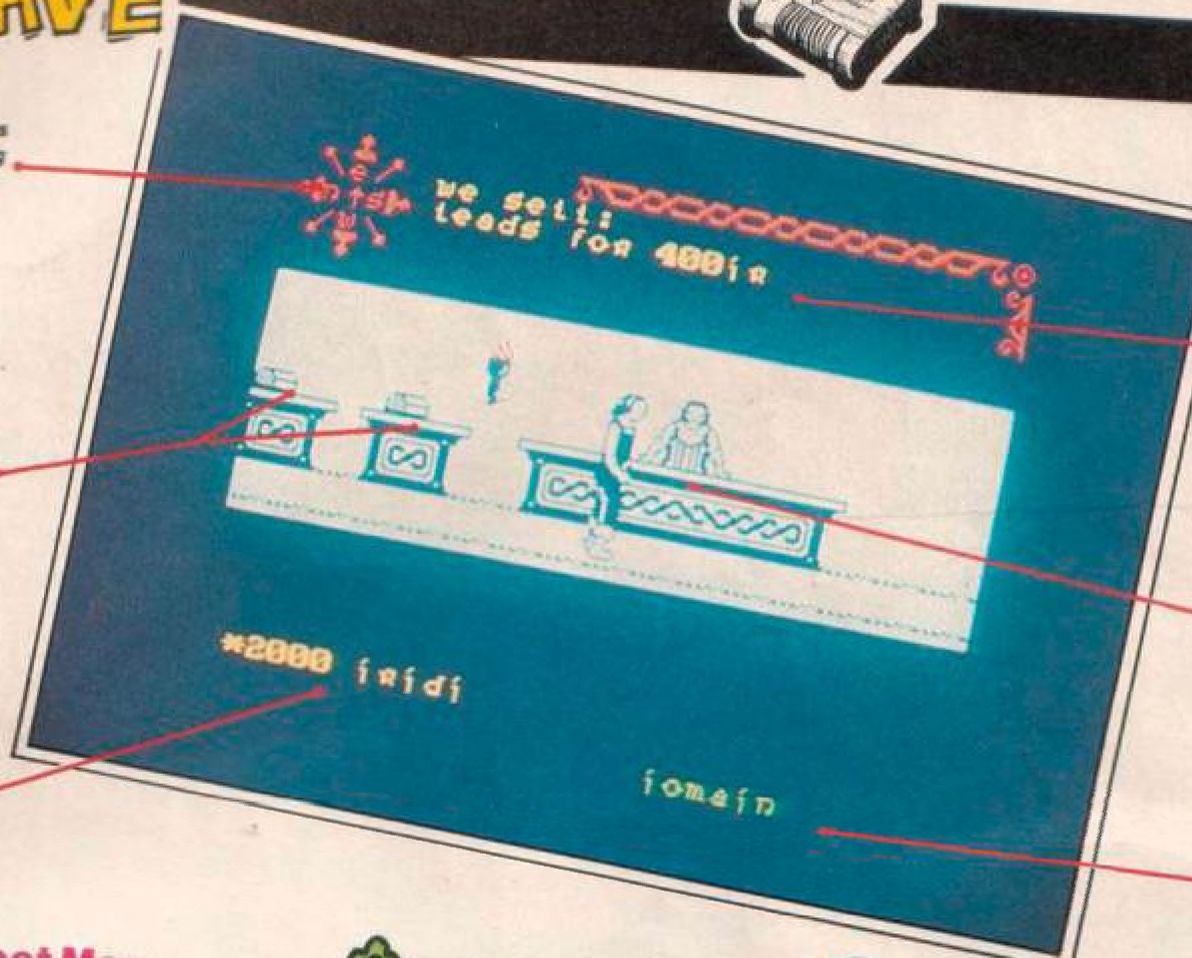
- **Keyboard control will take some time to get used to.**
- **May take a while to crack a problem and get into the game.**
- **Nothing significant in the way of sound.**

GRAPHICS	96%
SONICS	5%
GRAB FACTOR	72%
STAYING POWER	92%
A A RATING	90%

SECOND OPINION

Cuchulainn looks like a real roughneck out for some aggro, and so far we haven't found any of that. Trading and strategy are more important. It's good to have so many cleverly-animated characters to interact with, even if many of them do cause nothing but trouble. This is a difficult game, but rewards the effort it demands.

PC



The compass shows you facing south.

Pay the shopkeeper 400 iridi for the lead or try and steal it.

Leads lie on the table where you can pick one up.

The shopkeeper, an alchemist, awaits your decision.

All you have in the world is 2000 iridi.

The shop is in the argot quarter.

The A-Z Street Map

Finding your way around Dun Darach can be like taking your first trip on the London underground or navigating between the cowpats in Somerton. So to help out any desperate dark age adventurers we've put together the special map overleaf.

Each building is labelled with a code composed of one or two letters and a number. The letters indicate the building's use and the number is the actual number that appears on the door. Just as a bonus we've even told you what you can do in most of the buildings. Houses are simply labelled with the letter 'H' followed by the relevant number – but be warned, on the map, as in the game, many of the house numbers are duplicated.

DENIZENS OF DUN DARACH

KARA, KELI, KAHN: should be avoided at all costs since they are pickpockets and burglars. out for those Ks or you'll lose everything.

PITA: loves jewellery and a good natter.

RYDE: Galician pilot, to be avoided if you've stolen something.

MHOR: gentlewoman who likes books.

DAIN: friend of Mhor and a mystic.

BREN: a mapmaker who will exchange his ware for a fur.

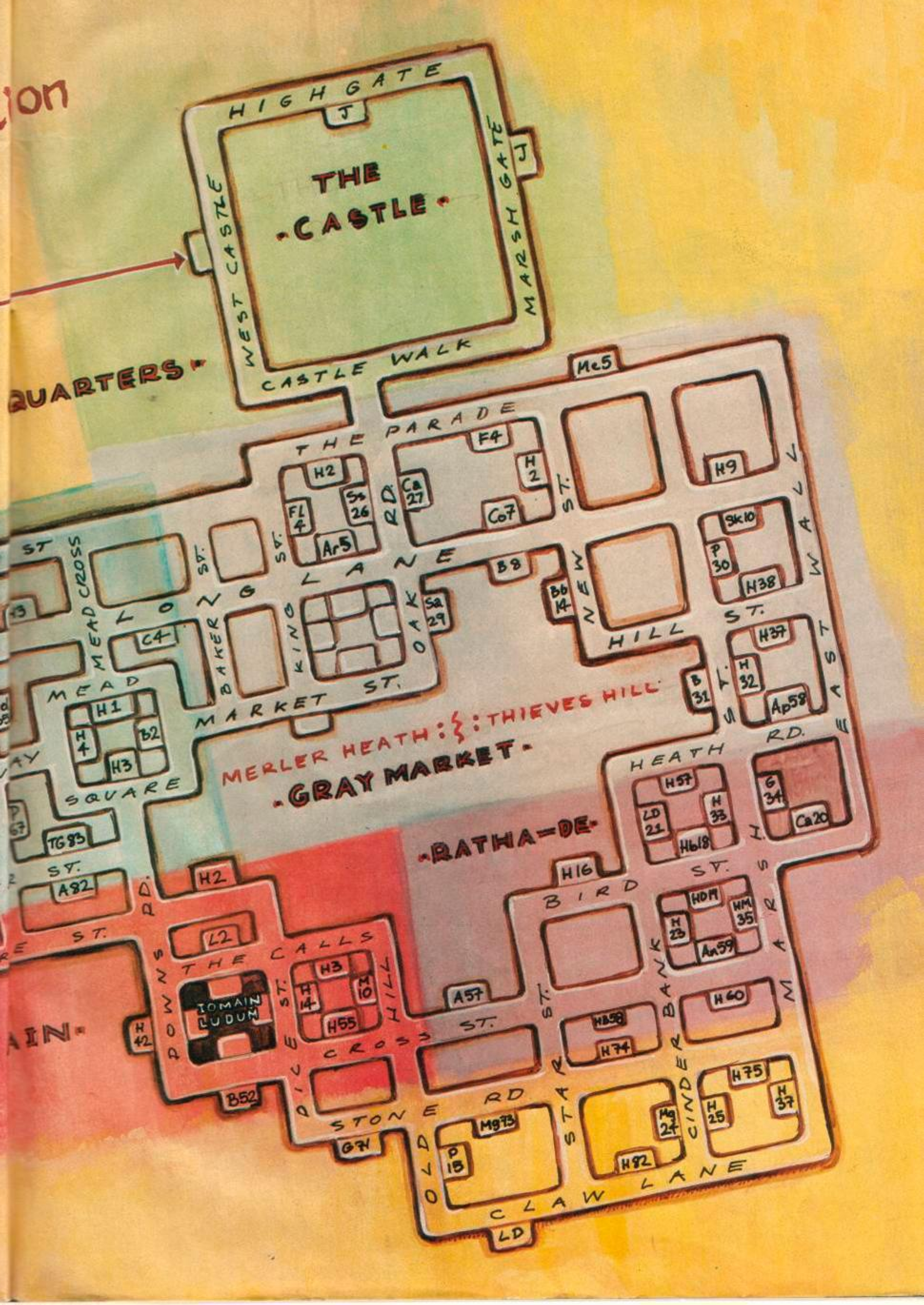
TETH: the jailer.

SKAR: the sorceress – can turn invisible as well as nasty.

LOEG: your best mate. The one you're trying to rescue.

QUARTERS	BUILDING	NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
OLD QUARTER	Strongroom	S1	Has a pearl in it
	Gallery	G3	Sells statues for 600 iridi
	Gallery	G1	Pictures
	Portal	P2	Portation fee 200 iridi
THE CASTLE	Jail	J	Says 'Teth is Jailer'
ARGOT	Broker	B2	Buy remnants for 750 iridi
	Cobblers	C4	Sell lasts for 200 iridi
	Broker	B1	Buy cloths for 200 iridi
	Gallery	G4	Pictures
	Assayer	A79	Sell goldbars for 600 iridi
	Herald	Hd65	Sell piles for 200 iridi
	Portal	P67	Portation fee 200 iridi
	Thieves Guild	TG83	Sell licences for 10000 iridi
	Assayer	A82	Sell platinas for 10000 iridi
IOMAIN	Ladyds	L2	Locked door!
	Broker	B52	Buy aurums for 800 iridi
	Minstrel	M10	Sell lyres for 1000 iridi
	Alchemist	A57	Sell leads for 400 iridi
THE SOKE	Gallery	G71	Pictures
	Portal	P15	Portation fee 200 iridi
	Magick	Mg73	Sell philtres for 2000 iridi
	Locked Door	LD	What's behind it?
	Magick	Mg24	Sell spells for 1000 iridi
RATHA-DE	Hall Belinus	HB58	No message
	Antiquary	An59	Sell relics for 500 iridi
	Hall Midir	HM35	No massage
	Hall Pathol	HP22	No message
	Hall Damu	HD19	No message
	Locked Door	LD21	Another mystery
	Herbist	Hb18	Sell rues for 100 iridi
	Gallery	G34	More pictures
	Carpenters	C20	Sell hammers for 200 iridi
GRAYMARKET (Thieves Quarter)	Apothecary	Ap56	Sell stings for 100 iridi
	Broker	B31	Buy spices for 200 iridi
	Portal	P30	Portation fee 200 iridi
	Skinner	Sk10	Sell moleskins for 1500 iridi
	Mercer	Me5	Sell swatchs for 150 iridi
	Barber	Bb14	Sell razors for 150 iridi
	Farmer	F4	Sell hoes for 250 iridi
	Cooper	Co7	Sell barrels for 300 iridi
	Broker	B8	Buy grapes for 200 iridi
GRAYMARKET (Mercer Heath)	Carpenter	Ca27	Sell adzes for 300 iridi
	Swordsmith	Sa26	Sell foils for 500 iridi
	Fletcher	F14	Sell arrows for 150 iridi
	Armourer	Ar5	Sell broadaxes for 400 iridi
	Draper	D6	Sell needles for 100 iridi
	Apothecary	Ap12	Sell hemlocks for 400 iridi
	Grocer	Gr14	Sell peppers for 150 iridi
	Archivist	Av2	Sell books for 700 iridi
	Vintner	V1	Sell wines for 150 iridi
	Salter	Sa29	Sell drysalts for 150 iridi


Dun Darach
An Amstrad Acti
Special
NORTH WALL
MOSS LANE
S1
G3
ROW
WEST WALL
PARK
N29
G1
H159
P2
OLD
H85
LEAF LANE
H86
ARGOT
HIGH
B1
WAY
AMBER
HILL
G4
H64
A79
WEST
HERME
ARGOT BANK
SILVE
IOM
By David Baxter and Kenny Bull
Illustration: Trevor Gilham


tion
HIGHGATE
J
THE CASTLE
WEST CASTLE
MARSH GATE
CASTLE WALK
QUARTERS
Mc5
THE PARADE
F4
H2
H 2
H9
Ca 27
Ss 26
FL 4
Ar5
Co7
SK10
P 30
H38
RD
NEW ST.
LONG LANE
B8
B6 14
Sa 29
OAK
KING ST.
BAKER ST.
MEAD CROSS
ST
C4
HILL ST.
H37
H 32
Ap58
B 31
EAST WALL
MEAD
MARKET ST.
H1
H 4
B2
H3
MERLER HEATH
THIEVES HILL
GRAY MARKET
HEATH RD.
H57
LD 21
H 33
H618
G 34
Ca20
SQUARE
P 67
TG83
RATHA-DE
H16
BIRD ST.
HD19
HM 35
H 23
An59
ST.
A82
H2
DOWNS RD.
L2
THE CALLS
H3
H 14
M 10
H55
HILL
DICE ST.
A57
STAR ST.
H58
H74
CINDER BANK
H60
MARSH
H 42
IOMAIN LUDUM
AIN
CROSS ST.
B52
STONE RD
G71
OLD
Mg73
P 15
Mg 24
H82
H75
H 25
H 37
CLAW LANE
LD

COMPETITION

50 copies of the Melbourne House karate smasher to be won in our cut-up competition

WAY OF THE FIST



Chop to the Top

Do you sincerely want to get your ribs broken? Do you sincerely want to break someone else's ribs? Do you sincerely want a copy of *The Way of the Exploding Fist*, our action-packed Mastergame from Melbourne House?

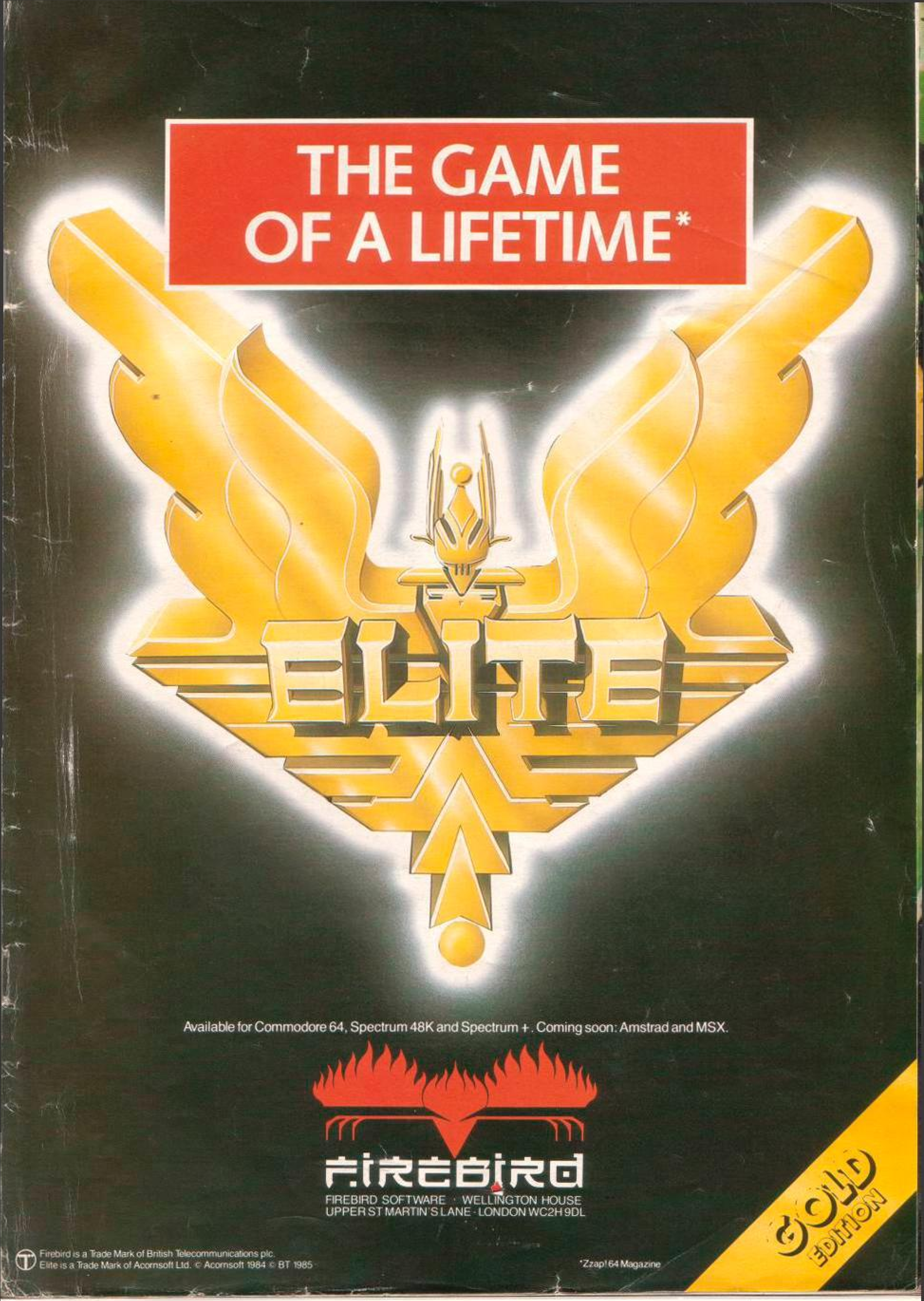
If the answer to one or more of these silly questions is 'yes', then look no further than our staggering competition. We're offering copies of *Fist* to 50 readers who can solve the incredibly complex problem we've posed.

Look at the illustration and you'll notice that something's gone badly wrong with our hero's hand. He's suffering from Way-of-the-Fragmented-Fist syndrome, a condition caused by smashing too many bricks.

All you have to do is re-assemble the nine pieces of the fist to make one seamless whole. The sections should go in order from number 1 at the wrist up to number 9 at the top – you just have to sort out in which order the pieces go, working from the wrist upwards. So, if you think section g is nearest the wrist you should write 1g. If you think section f is next then you should write 2 h, and so on.

Your entries must have nine numbers with their respective letters and should be sent, on a postcard or the back of an envelope, to:*Exploding Fist Competition, Amstrad Action, Valeside, West Street, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7PS.* The closing date is October 14th and Blurb Writer's decision is final.

Blurb Writer


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